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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE 2006 LEBANON-ISRAELI WAR

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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ABSTRACT

The 2006 Lebanon-Israeli War, also known as the July War, is popularly regarded as a Hezbollah victory. The conflict represented the fifth time in the past 30 years that Israeli forces have entered Lebanon with the intent of clearing the border area of terrorists. Israeli ineptitude combined with thorough Hezbollah preparation of the battlespace to produce the perception of Hezbollah victory. One likely result of the war is that opponents of the United States will attempt to replicate Hezbollah's successes. Careful study of the conflict by western military professionals will thus prepare them for enemy tactics, techniques and procedures that will likely appear on future battlefields. The 2006 conflict in Lebanon between Israel and the terrorist group Hezbollah serves as an example of what has been described "Hybrid War," and offers lessons for American policy makers and joint commanders as the United States fights militant extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas; these lessons include the imperative of strategy-policy match, the need for proper war preparation, and the importance of sanctuary to terrorist organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States has been embroiled in conflict with “faith fueled fanaticism” in Muslim areas across the globe.¹ Although the invasion of Iraq and some of the fighting in Afghanistan is representative of traditional high intensity conflict, the enduring nature of U.S. involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and the Philippines since 2001 is best described as counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The application of U.S. military force in these operations has been marked by adaptation. Using actionable intelligence to target individuals, armed unmanned aerial vehicles and Special Operations Forces (SOF) replaced high intensity combat operations in Fallujah, Iraq and the Shahikot Valley in Afghanistan. Reflecting hard won COIN lessons-learned, U.S. forces established security stations in Iraqi cities and embedded trainers in Iraqi and Afghan army units. Just as U.S. forces have shown this capacity to learn, America’s adversaries have proven to be resilient and adaptive, reaffirming Carl Von Clausewitz’s observation that “In war, the will is directed at an animate object that *reacts*.”² U. S. Marine Corps doctrine describes this adaptation between belligerents as “a process of continuous mutual adaption, of give and take, move and countermove.”³ Where tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) employed by terrorists and extremists have proven to be successful, those TTP’s have been and will be replicated across the region. This “tactical plagiarism” includes the successful use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers in Iraq, which have subsequently

¹Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Arlington, Virginia: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, 55.

² Carl von Clausewitz, (ed. by Howard and Paret), *On War*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, 149.

³ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 Warfighting*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 3-4.

become standard tools for the Taliban in Afghanistan, where suicide bombers had traditionally been non-existent.⁴ Importantly, adversaries learn not just from engagements against U.S. forces, but also from engagements against all “Western” militaries.

Israel is regarded by many in the Arab world as a proxy of the United States, with American weapons, training, and tactics. Israel’s long and ongoing struggle with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, offers a laboratory and learning opportunity for terrorists across the region.⁵ An Arab (and arguably worldwide) perception of Hezbollah’s success in their 2006 fight against Israel is of “a major turning point in the region,” where Hezbollah was the “first Arab military organization able to inflict a serious defeat on the Israel Defense Forces.”⁶ Terrorist organizations and adversary nations can be expected to emulate Hezbollah’s successful practices, and the U.S. can expect to encounter Hezbollah’s TTPs on future battlefields. Hezbollah “clearly demonstrated the ability of non-state actors to study and deconstruct the vulnerabilities of Western style militaries, and devise appropriate countermeasures ... The lessons-learned from this confrontation are already cross-pollinating with other states and non-state actors.”⁷ U.S. strategists should similarly attempt to distill military lessons from both

⁴ The term “tactical plagiarism” comes from Hoffman, 16. For a discussion of the rise of suicide bombings in Afghanistan see Brian Glyn Williams, “Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan,” jiaa.janes.com (September 2007), <http://www.brianglynwilliams.com/IAA%20suicide.pdf> (accessed April 3, 2009).

⁵ The spelling “Hezbollah” is most common in western nations, Middle Eastern authors tend to use the spelling “Hizbollah” or “Hizballah.” Hezbollah will be used throughout the paper except when direct quotations require otherwise.

⁶ David Makovsky and Jeffrey White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War: A Preliminary Assessment (Policy Focus #60)*. Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006, 35.

⁷ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 8.

sides of the 2006 conflict.⁸ While the U.S. has traditionally drawn COIN lessons and doctrine from Vietnam or Malaya, “Israel’s combat theater more closely resembles America’s challenges in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa in terms of cultural, historical, and political/religious persuasion than that of communist-inspired insurgents in Asia several decades ago.”⁹

A final imperative for close study and analysis of the 2006 Lebanon War is that there appear to be similarities between the challenges faced by Israel against Hezbollah, and the challenges faced by the West as it fights the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. The most striking of these similarities is the existence of terrorist organizations within the sovereign boundaries of Lebanon and Pakistan, of which both governments are at least nominally aligned with the U.S. and the West.

The 2006 conflict in Lebanon between Israel and the terrorist group Hezbollah serves as an example of what has been described “Hybrid War,” and offers lessons for American policy makers and joint commanders as the United States fights militant extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s tribal areas; these lessons include the imperative of strategy-policy match, the need for proper preparation for war, and the importance of sanctuary to terrorist organizations.

The next chapter will provide a broad historical overview of the Levant region, with particular focus on past conflicts between Israel and adversaries in Lebanon. An observer will note that Israel has conducted five separate large-scale military operations in Lebanon since 1978, and in some cases have committed the same mistakes five times.

⁸ Andrew Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment (Policy Focus #63)*. Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006, 1.

⁹ Thomas H. Henriksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*. Hurlburt Field, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2007, 6.

Accordingly, the historical analysis suggests that some degree of Hezbollah's 2006 success was not due to that organization's prowess, but is more rightly a result of Israeli ineptitude. The historical overview is followed by a more detailed treatment of the immediate events leading up to the 2006 Lebanon War, and the actual conduct of the war by both belligerents.

The third chapter introduces and attempts to define the concept of Hybrid War. The relevance and utility of this concept is discussed, both as a tool to analyze the 2006 Lebanon War, and as a tool to better understand the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. The relevant similarities and disparities between Lebanon and Pakistan, and the competing belligerents are identified and analyzed.

Chapter four identifies lessons that provide the greatest relevance to the strategic and operational levels of war. These lessons include the absolute requirement for a policy-strategy match, the importance of preparation for war, and the criticality of sanctuary in sustaining terrorist groups.

The concluding chapter presents a summary of the 2006 War, the reasons the study of this war is of use to American military practitioners, and the usefulness of the Hybrid War construct as a descriptor of this, and future, wars. Finally, an overview of the essential lessons-learned is presented.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Since its creation by United Nations (UN) mandate in 1948, Israel's history and interaction with Lebanon can be divided into three phases. From 1948-1973 Israeli was engaged in a fight for national survival against Arab nation states. After proving dominance in high intensity warfare, and ultimately making peace with Egypt, the threat to the Jewish nation shifted from wars of survival to combating the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and other Palestinian terrorist groups. The period from 1984 to the present was characterized by Israel's long occupation of southern Lebanon, and shift in the primary threat from the PLO to Hezbollah. The state of Israel made four major military forays into their northern neighbor prior to 2006, with each incursion attempting to accomplish a similar objective - eliminate terrorist groups on the northern border in order to halt rocket attacks, mortar fire, and cross-border incursions.

PHASE 1: 1948-1973

Israel was created when the UN General Assembly voted to create separate Arab and Jewish states from the post World War I British mandate of Palestine. At the time of the UN vote there were approximately 600,000 Jews and 1.2 million Arabs living in Palestine. Although the Jewish community accepted the UN decision, the Palestinians and the Arab League did not. When Israel declared independence in 1948, she was immediately embroiled in a war of survival with surrounding Arab nations, including Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Confident that the newly created State of Israel would be crushed by Arab forces, over 700,000 Palestinians fled to neighboring

countries and refugee camps, to await the outcome of the conflict.¹⁰ Although operating under a façade of unity, the Arab states were actually pursuing distinctly different nationalistic aims. Transjordan wanted to control Jerusalem and what is now known as the West Bank. Egypt and Syria coveted both Arab and Jewish land in Palestine, with the result that their governments actively blocked Palestinian attempts to form their own state. When the Arab armies were ultimately defeated in 1949 (in no small part by agreeing to several cease fires that allowed Israel to rearm), most Palestinians were afraid to return to their homes. This created a large refugee population that sowed the seeds for the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and ultimately the creation of Hamas and Hezbollah. In the ten years from 1948 to 1958, the Jewish population of Israel grew from 600,000 to 2 million, mainly as a result of emigration from Europe and across the Middle East. The ability of the Palestinians to reclaim their homes and land within the borders of Israel diminished and ultimately disappeared as the new arrivals established themselves.¹¹

Throughout the 1950's Israel was subject to "Fedayeen" attacks from the Gaza strip (then controlled by Egypt), as well as occasional border clashes with other neighbors. No Arab states had yet recognized Israel's existence, and the stain of the 1948 War on the Arab psyche was a guarantor of further conflict. Accordingly, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) remained focused on high intensity state warfare.

In the quarter of a century following its independence Israel fought and won two additional wars of national survival - the 1967 "Six Day" War, and the 1973 "Yom Kippur" War. For the Palestinians, the crushing Arab defeat in the Six Day War was

¹⁰ Not all Palestinians left voluntarily, some were driven out. For a discussion see MidEastWeb, "Israel and Palestine: A Brief History – Part I," <http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm> (accessed April 3, 2009).

¹¹ Ibid.

another blow to their hopes of returning to their pre-1948 homes. Not long after, Palestinian nationalist groups such as the PLO began an increasingly violent campaign of terrorist attacks against Israel. The PLO was unwelcome in Egypt or Syria, and with the entire Sinai including Gaza occupied by the Israelis, the PLO ultimately established itself in Jordan and Lebanon. As the PLO grew in capability and stature, the Jordanian government grew increasingly concerned about the organization's destabilizing influence among a large domestic Palestinian population. In 1970, Jordanian security forces ruthlessly expelled the PLO in an event known as "Black September." The only remaining location where the PLO could reconstitute and still be able to strike Israel was Lebanon.

The Lebanon border, which for 20 years had been peaceful while conflict raged on Israel's borders with Egypt, Jordan and Syria, soon became the focal point of Israeli security operations. As Israel became embroiled in conflict with the PLO, it subsequently found itself entangled in Lebanese security matters. Following PLO success with airline hijackings in 1968, for example, Israeli helicopter gunships preemptively destroyed 14 Lebanese Middle East Airways commercial aircraft at the Beirut Airport.¹² Syria, while unwilling to let the PLO operate openly from their territory, was willing to support them in Lebanon. Lebanon thus became a sanctuary for the PLO, and the organization ultimately established training camps that serviced not only their own members, but also other terror organizations including the Irish Republican Army, Japanese Red Army, and Spanish Basque separatists.¹³

¹² Henrikson, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 7.

¹³ Ibid, 28.

PHASE 2: 1974-1983

With the PLO firmly established in Lebanon, and little likelihood of a new war of national survival after the 1973 War, the border with Lebanon became the most pressing threat to Israeli security. In 1975, the situation worsened when Lebanon collapsed into civil war. The initial clashes were between Maronite Christian groups and armed Palestinians, but various Muslim sects quickly joined the Palestinians. The Lebanese Civil War laid bare the religious and ethnic fault lines defined by the patchwork of neighborhoods (or “confessionals”) across Beirut, and the composition of the opposing sides was complex. The “Christian” side, known as the Lebanese Front, is best described as the force supporting the status quo ante bellum in Lebanon. The opposition, labeled the Lebanese National Movement and nominally headed by Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt, “was far less cohesive and organized ... and included a variety of militias from leftist organizations and guerillas from rejectionist Palestinian (non-mainstream PLO) organizations.”¹⁴ When the Lebanese Front experienced increased success in January 1976, the main forces of the PLO (the Palestinian Liberation Army) joined the opposition. Shortly thereafter, the Lebanese Army fractured along ethnic and religious lines, and Muslim soldiers shifted the balance of power in the Civil War to the Lebanese National Movement. Faced with the prospect of a breakaway Christian state likely to be aligned with Israel, or a radical Muslim government in Beirut, the Syrians entered the Civil War on the side of the Maronite Christians (while still providing material support

¹⁴ Thomas Collelo, ed, *Lebanon: A Country Study*. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 30.

for the PLO). Syrian military forces balanced the relative power of the combatants, and allowed a cease-fire to be signed in 1976.¹⁵

At the end of 1976 Lebanon was left with a weak central government, opposing armed militias, and a capital divided by an ethnic “Green Line.” Syria established permanent garrisons in the Bekaa Valley and effectively exercised veto power in Lebanese politics. By siding with the Maronite Christians, Syria also had increased plausible deniability of their links with terrorist organizations in Lebanon. The instigator of the Civil War, the PLO, was the main beneficiary of the aftermath. The Palestinians still enjoyed the sponsorship of the Syrians (made easier with the partial Syrian occupation of Lebanon), but now had no interference in their activities from the Lebanese central government. For Israel the alignment of Syria, which had no intention of joining Egypt in making peace, and the PLO, was dangerous.

With the freedom of action provided by a divided Lebanon, the PLO increased the volume of rocket and mortar fire into northern Israel, and increased the incidents of cross border terrorist attacks on civilian targets. Presaging their actions in 1982 and 2006, Israel sent troops across the border in 1978 under OPERATION LITANI, a direct response to a PLO seaborne terrorist attack in Haifa that killed 37 Israeli civilians.¹⁶ 25,000 IDF soldiers crossed the border with the stated objective to “repel terrorist organizations beyond the Litani River.”¹⁷ In execution, however, the IDF discovered few terrorists and minimal terrorist infrastructure to destroy. PLO operatives easily blended

¹⁵ Collelo, *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 31-32.

¹⁶ Henricksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 26, and Collelo, *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 196.

¹⁷ Jewish Virtual Library, “Golani Brigade,”

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/golani_brigade.html (accessed April 3, 2009).

into the native population, or were able to escape and evade across the Litani River. The most visible result of OPERATION LITANI was hundreds of thousands of Lebanese refugees, and over 2000 Lebanese dead.¹⁸ Within three months Israel withdrew its forces from all but a thin strip of Lebanese territory. Approximately 3,000 Christian militiamen known as the Free Lebanon Army, a force that would eventually change its name to the South Lebanon Army (SLA), were left in place.¹⁹ The operation's lack of success from an Israeli standpoint is illustrated by the fact that in 1982, Israel launched another invasion to eradicate the PLO from Lebanon. The PLO learned its organization and capabilities could not stand up to the IDF, and subsequently:

“PLO emissaries purchased arms ... acquiring Grad and Katyusha artillery rockets and antiquated but functional T-34 tanks ... Arafat reorganized the command and control structure of his forces, transforming the Palestine Liberation Army from a decentralized collection of terrorist and guerilla bands to a disciplined standing army. By 1981 the Kastel, Karami, and Yarmuk brigades were established, and seven new artillery battalions were organized.”²⁰

The PLO was evolving from a pure guerilla force into a hybrid regular/irregular force, foreshadowing by a quarter century the actions taken by Hezbollah in its 2006 fight against Israel.

PHASE 3: 1983-PRESENT

By 1982, Palestinian incursions from Lebanon and continued cross-border rocket and mortar fire on Israeli towns had “made Lebanon a virtual national obsession among

¹⁸ Scott Macleod, “What Makes Lebanon so Skeptical About the Peace,” *Time* (August 2006), <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1226108,00.html> (accessed April 3, 2009).

¹⁹ Collelo, *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 196.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 201.

the Israeli public.”²¹ The Israeli government responded by launching OPERATION PEACE FOR GALILEE. Six and a half army divisions conducted a conventional ground invasion of Lebanon. The IDF presented three different invasion options to its political leaders: (1) a shallow penetration to clear PLO camps close to the border, (2) a broader operation to clear Tyre and Sidon of PLO forces, but to stop short of Beirut and avoid confrontation with Syria, and (3) the “Big Pines” plan, a deep penetration that would include taking Beirut, and would actively seek confrontation with Syria.²² The Israeli cabinet authorized an invasion, but “set strict limits on the extent of the incursion ... The IDF was to advance no farther than 40 kilometers, the operation was to last only twenty-four hours, Syrian forces were not to be attacked, and Beirut was not to be approached.”²³ Defense Minister Ariel Sharon subsequently manipulated events and incrementally expanded operations with the result that Israel backed-in to the “Big Pines” plan. The end result was a strategy-policy mismatch where:

“...the IDF implemented its attacks in increments, neither openly recognizing nor acknowledging its destination and objectives. Had it been ordered from the outset to secure Beirut, it could have done so in an effective and efficient manner. Instead the IDF advance unfolded in an ad hoc and disorganized fashion, greatly increasing the difficulty of the operation.”²⁴

Thus the IDF was initially handed a mission to clear PLO forces away from Israel’s border to a depth of 40 kilometers, yet in execution found itself in a campaign with an expanded mission to: (1) destroy PLO military strength, eliminate their infrastructure and drive them out of Lebanon, (2) help Christian forces seize Beirut and install a stable, pro-

²¹ Henriksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 27.

²² Urban Lessons-learned: Operation Peace for Galilee, *The Urban Operations Journal*, www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/740602/posts (accessed April 3, 2009).

²³ Collelo, *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 201.

²⁴ Ibid, 201-202.

Israel Christian government, and (3) push Syrian troops and Syrian influence out of Lebanon.²⁵

Israel successfully accomplished only a portion of their objectives. After intense urban combat in the PLO camps in Tyre and Sidon, the PLO was driven back to Beirut, abandoning infrastructure and resources in southern Lebanon. Following a seventy-day siege of Beirut, Arafat agreed in principle to withdraw PLO forces from Lebanon. Subsequent diplomatic efforts resulted in a multi-national force (MNF), including U.S. Marines, assisting in the evacuation of 10,600 PLO fighters and 3,600 Syrian troops to Tunisia and Syria. The IDF also succeeded in confronting the Syrians, mauling the Syrian 1st Armored Division in the Bekaa Valley, destroying Syrian anti-air missile batteries in Lebanon, and shooting down 79 Syrian combat aircraft. What the Israelis could not achieve, however, was the installation of a stable government in Beirut, or the complete ouster of Syrian forces. In the end, the IDF suffered 3,316 casualties, and killed or captured more than 8,000 Palestinian guerillas. More ominously, and more devastating to world public opinion, an estimated 18,000 Lebanese civilians died, and another 30,000 had been wounded. The IDF withdrew south of the Awwali River in September 1983, and further withdrew to the Litani River in February 1985. That same year the IDF staged a final withdrawal to a narrow slice of territory some 6-10 miles wide along the southern border of Lebanon. Following the bombing of a Marine headquarters, the MNF also withdrew its forces from Beirut in February 1984, again leaving Syria as the dominant force in Lebanon.²⁶

²⁵ Urban Lessons-learned: Operation Peace for Galilee, *The Urban Operations Journal*, www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/740602/posts (accessed April 3, 2009).

²⁶ Collelo, *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 203-212.

After failing to achieve PEACE FOR GALILEE objectives, Israel created a “security zone” from its border north to the Litani River. Since the Lebanese Army was not capable of controlling this zone, the Israelis increased the size and capabilities of the SLA, and augmented this indigenous force with IDF garrisons. Due to years of PLO heavy handedness and neglect from the central Lebanese government, the Shia population initially supported the Israeli invasion. Shias in the security zone, however, “soon came to see the IDF less as a liberator than an occupier.”²⁷ The change happened for multiple reasons, including an innocuous event during the Shia holy day of Ashura in 1983. On that day, Israeli forces found themselves intermingled with a religious procession, and killed two Shia civilians as they tried to extricate themselves.²⁸ Initially unorganized, the Shias “turned out to be implacable foes, vehemently resisting the Israeli presence in southern Lebanon.”²⁹ This initial resistance, with the assistance of better organized Shia groups in Beirut, and material support from Iran and Syria, grew into Hezbollah. As Prime Minister Ehud Barack stated, “When we entered Lebanon ... there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shia in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah.”³⁰

Iran’s sponsorship of the Lebanese Shia population was a critical enabler for the birth and growth of Hezbollah. Still fresh from their own Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran envisioned expanding their influence to Shia enclaves throughout the Middle East. To capitalize on the power vacuum in Lebanon left by the PLO, Iran sent large sums of

²⁷ Henriksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 29.

²⁸ Neil Swidey, “Tipping Point,” *Boston Globe* (27 April, 2003), <http://home.comcast.net/~neilswidey/tipping.htm> (accessed April 3, 2009).

²⁹ Collelo, *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 213.

³⁰ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007, 33.

money and over a thousand members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to Lebanon.³¹ In 1983, despite their ongoing war with Iraq, Iran invested over 200 million dollars in Lebanon.³² Eventually, the most capable Hezbollah members would receive their advanced training inside Iran proper.

Israel and Hezbollah soon “settled into a near classic guerilla conflict on Lebanese soil.”³³ Hezbollah’s intent was to drive the IDF out of Lebanon, while simultaneously eroding Israeli public support by inflicting a constant stream of casualties on the occupation forces. In support of these objectives, and providing clear evidence of the classical guerilla nature of the conflict, Hezbollah developed 13 principles of war “designed to defeat a relatively fixed, technologically advanced enemy:”

1. Avoid the strong, attack the weak – attack and withdrawal!
2. Protecting our fighters is more important than causing enemy casualties!
3. Strike only when success is assured!
4. Surprise is essential to success. If you are spotted, you have failed!
5. Don’t get into a set-piece battle. Slip away like smoke, before the enemy can drive home his advantage!
6. Attaining the goal demands patience, in order to discover the enemies weak points!
7. Keep moving; avoid formation of a front line!
8. Keep the enemy on constant alert, at the front and in the rear!
9. The road to great victory passes through thousands of small victories!
10. Keep up the morale of the fighters; avoid notions of the enemy’s superiority!
11. The media has innumerable guns whose hits are like bullets. Use them in battle!
12. The population is a treasure – nurture it!
13. Hurt the enemy and then stop before he abandons restraint!³⁴

³¹ Henriksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 4.

³² Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon*. New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 30.

³³ Henriksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 31.

³⁴ Matt M Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War (Long War Occasional Paper 26)*. Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008, 7.

As the insurgency gained strength, and IDF losses mounted, Hezbollah correspondingly grew in competence.

In response to increased casualties in the security zone, the IDF launched OPERATION ACCOUNTABILITY in 1993. Although Hezbollah was prepared for an Israeli ground offensive, they were unprepared for Israeli air power and indirect fire. “The military operation was unlike any Hezbollah had encountered in that the Israelis chiefly employed standoff-based precision firepower. It proved a valuable lesson and one that would better prepare Hezbollah for the next war.”³⁵ Once again, Israeli military results from the operation were desultory, and did not change the situation on the ground in the security zone.

Three years later Israel launched OPERATION GRAPES OF WRATH. In addition to the standoff firepower they had used in OPERATION ACCOUNTABILITY, Israel displayed their intention to target the Shia population and Lebanese infrastructure within the scope of their campaign. This new Israeli strategy was devised to generate pressure on the Lebanese and Syrian Governments to reign in the Shia militants. Hezbollah’s response to attacks on Lebanese civilian targets was to strike Israel proper with Katyusha rockets. “Although Israel inflicted heavy losses on Hezbollah, at no time during GRAPES OF WRATH was the IDF’s standoff precision weaponry able to silence Hezbollah’s rockets. It was a lesson noted by Hezbollah and entirely ignored by the IDF.”³⁶ GRAPES OF WRATH failed to reduce the insurgency in southern Lebanon, and worse, it generated condemnation from the world media and provided a classroom for Hezbollah.

³⁵ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 8.

³⁶ Ibid, 9.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak was elected in 1999 primarily due to a single campaign promise: Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Ehud Barak had been a career army officer, and was the IDF Chief of Staff during OPERATION ACCOUNTABILITY. Although he expressed a desire to work with the governments of Lebanon and Syria to develop a diplomatic framework for withdrawal, he announced that “withdrawal from Lebanon does not depend on any Israeli-Syrian agreement ... we must bring the boys back home” – unilaterally if necessary.³⁷ Once it became clear that there would be no political agreement with Syria to serve as a framework for Israeli withdrawal, the Prime Minister not only directed the IDF to finalize evacuation plans, he also told his generals “the withdrawal must be carried out in a way that will surprise Hezbollah and deny it the ability to muster forces.”³⁸ By imposing a veil of secrecy, Barak unwittingly caused the withdrawal to become a rout. The SLA was not involved in the planning, and as the withdrawal began they abandoned posts in a mad rush for Israel and safety. Hezbollah succeeded in their stated goal to “stampede the Israelis and the SLA into as disorderly and costly a withdrawal as possible.”³⁹ What Prime Minister Barak had intended as a move that would end conflict and foster peace instead handed a public victory to Hezbollah.

While events unfolded in Lebanon, in 1987 Israel was faced with a “second front.” A spontaneous popular uprising started in the Gaza Strip and quickly spread to the West Bank. It came to be known as the “Intifada.” The Palestinians who participated in the uprising offered a spectrum of opposition, from civil disobedience to violence. Iconic photography of Palestinian youths throwing rocks at Israeli battle tanks

³⁷ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 21-22.

³⁸ Ibid, 23.

³⁹ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 11.

quickly became the storyline of the Intifada. The IDF was extensively utilized to maintain peace and order, and they necessarily acquired the skill sets necessary for policing. Tactical actions generally involved platoon or squad sized IDF units, who were more likely to employ nightsticks or rubber bullets than lethal force. The bulldozer rather than the tank became Israeli's preferred weapon to fight the uprising. Even so, the death toll in the first Intifada was estimated at 1,300 Palestinians and 160 Israelis, with another 1,000 alleged Palestinian collaborators killed by their own community. The first Intifada ended with the Madrid Conference and the promise of political reconciliation. The negotiations allowed for the PLO to return from exile in Tunis.⁴⁰

The Second Intifada started with Likud leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000. This contemporary conflict between Israel and Hamas – a Palestinian terrorist organization more radical than the PLO – proved more violent than the first. Some speculate that Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon that same year, fueled by an Arab perception of Hezbollah success, led to the initiation of the second Intifada. There is little dispute however, that the Hamas kidnapping of an IDF soldier in Gaza on June 25th 2006 was a catalyst for Israeli involvement in Lebanon less than a month later.⁴¹

The proximate cause of the 2006 War, abducting IDF soldiers, has been a large part of the strategy of Hezbollah and Hamas. Israel has seemingly rewarded kidnappers by making out of balance prisoner exchanges. Hundreds of prisoners were exchanged for even the remains of Israeli soldiers. In 2000, "Hezbollah forces kidnapped and killed

⁴⁰ MidEastWeb, "Israel and Palestine: A Brief History – Part I," <http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm> (accessed April 3, 2009).

⁴¹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 9, and Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 11.

three Israeli soldiers, later returning their bodies ... in an exchange for 400 Lebanese prisoners.”⁴² Israel’s willingness to negotiate, and the political reward for terrorist actions, encouraged further occurrences. In an attempt to break the cycle, the IDF responded furiously to the 2006 Hamas kidnapping, launching a military operation in Gaza called SUMMER RAIN. With the heat turned up on Hamas, IDF leaders worried that “it might be a good idea to consider possible repercussions on the situation in the North ... Hezbollah might see itself obliged to respond to developments in Gaza.”⁴³ In fact, Hezbollah had been attempting for some time to kidnap Israeli soldiers, and their efforts were about to bear fruit.

In summary, from its founding in 1948 until 1973, Israel prepared for and fought wars of national survival against its Arab neighbors. After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel’s security efforts shifted to its border with Lebanon, where it battled the PLO and later Hezbollah. The security environment in the Levant has always been convoluted. Arabs have fought Arabs; the Shia minority that governs the Sunni majority in Syria has supported Lebanese Maronite Christians, and at one point Israel was supported by the Shia population in Southern Lebanon. Israel has proved unable to achieve its objectives in Lebanon militarily despite repeated invasions, and has suffered several times from strategy-policy mismatches. Hezbollah, however, has institutionalized valuable lessons-learned from each of its fights with the IDF. Coupled with the resource drain of the Intifada and the adaptations of its foes, Israel’s history of involvement in Lebanon presaged its conduct in the 2006 War.

⁴² Henriksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 14.

⁴³ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 10.

THE 2006 WAR

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE 2006 WAR

The two Intifadas greatly influenced the IDF, affecting both its culture and its preparedness for the 2006 War. In the years following the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the primary missions assigned to the IDF were COIN operations in Lebanon, and police actions in the West Bank and Gaza strip. After Israel's unilateral 2000 withdrawal from Lebanon, the COIN fight disappeared, and police actions took center stage. With ground forces fully engaged in the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli airpower assumed the role of the primary force for state defense against external aggression. The institutional mindset centered on COIN and policing for ground forces, coupled with a belief that airpower and precision weapons would shoulder the burden in Israel's future wars, proved to have enormous implications for the IDF. In 2006 Israel would be required to execute a high intensity conventional fight with forces unprepared for the change in focus. As Avi Kober summarized, "Many of the IDF's weaknesses that were exposed during the war derived from the fact that ... when the first Intifada broke out in the West Bank and Gaza, policing in the territories had become its main mission."⁴⁴ Broadly, these weaknesses were borne out in doctrine, training, experience and culture.

Although engaged in their own conflict in Lebanon and the occupied territories, Israel looked with keen interest at the U. S. application of military power in OPERATION DESERT STORM, and Kosovo. Like other observers, the IDF believed that the success of airpower in these two campaigns demonstrated that air had become the dominant arm in warfare. Such an idea had great appeal to both military and political

⁴⁴ Avi Kober, "The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?" *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol 31, No. 1, (February 2008), 14.

decision makers – airpower employing precision munitions could end a conflict quickly and limit the collateral damage that became fodder for Arab news media. More importantly, ground forces could be used sparingly, potentially decreasing the number of friendly casualties. In the aftermath of the 2006 War, one retired IDF general “pointed to over-reliance on precision technology as one of the major reasons for the IDF’s malfunctioning in the war, second only to the impact of the long occupation of the territories.”⁴⁵

The 1991 DESERT STORM air campaign construct was based on Air Force Colonel John Warden’s “5-rings” concept, which identified an enemy in terms of a system with five broad attributes, and advocated simultaneously attacking those attributes in order to paralyze an opponent.⁴⁶ In the U.S. military, supporters of Warden’s concept found natural allies among those who believed that computing power and the microchip had initiated a “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA). RMA advocates eventually found an avenue to implement their ideas as part of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s “transformation” campaign. U. S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) built on Warden’s ideas and published a concept called “Effects Based Operations” (EBO). In theoretical language, EBO was defined as:

“operations, conceived and planned in a systems framework that considers the full range of direct, indirect and cascading effects, which may – with different degrees of probability – be achieved by the application of military, diplomatic, psychological, and economic interests.”⁴⁷

The JFCOM EBO white paper generated a host of supporting concepts in the U.S., including Effects Based Planning, Effects Based Targeting, Effects Based Warfare, Rapid

⁴⁵ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 19.

⁴⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 23.

⁴⁷ Paul K. Davis, *Effects Based Operations: A Grand Challenge for the Analytical Community*. Santa Monica, California: RAND, 2001, 7.

Decisive Operations, Operational Net Assessment, and System of Systems Analysis.⁴⁸

From an Israeli vantage point, the JFCOM concepts were affirmation of lessons it had independently gleaned from DESERT STORM and the air campaign over Kosovo.

Following their withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, the IDF formally began to adopt a series of new concepts, starting with EBO.

Drawing on their experiences in Lebanon and the occupied territories, and with the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq providing further examples of the primacy of airpower, EBO proponents in the IDF believed that Israel was unlikely to fight conventional wars in the future. As was stated in the Winograd Report, the report of a committee that was formed to investigate Israel's performance after the 2006 war:

“Some of the political and military elites in Israel have reached the conclusion that Israel is beyond the era of wars. It had enough military might and superiority to deter others from declaring war against her ... the conclusion was that the main challenge facing the land forces would be low intensity asymmetrical conflicts. Given these assumptions, the IDF did not need to prepare for real war ...”⁴⁹

For the Israelis, EBO was a starting point for a completely new theory on warfare known as “Systemic Operational Design” (SOD). The IDF's Operational Doctrine Research Institute (OTRI) “believed that delving into non-military post-modern theories would equip senior officers with the tools necessary for dealing with the complex and changing realities of war.”⁵⁰ SOD “drew heavily on terminology from ‘*post modern French philosophy, literary theory, architecture, and psychology*,’” and according to the OTRI founder, it was “not intended for ordinary mortals.”⁵¹ While many in the IDF who

⁴⁸ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 23.

⁴⁹ Winograd Commission Findings Summary, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/122290 (accessed 27 May 2009).

⁵⁰ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 31.

⁵¹ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 25.

“could not understand why the old system of simple orders and terminology was being replaced” resisted SOD, the OTRI theoretical work formed the basis of a new IDF doctrine that was signed by the Chief of the IDF General Staff, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz, in May 2006.⁵²

General Halutz was the first Israeli Air Force (IAF) officer to hold the Chief of Staff position. He brought an air-centric notion of future warfare with him. As Chief of the IAF he had declared “Airpower alone can decide, and let alone be a senior partner to such decision.” Ground forces were a key element of COIN operations in the West Bank and Gaza, but land forces should not be sent into action “as long as there is an effective alternative.” Acknowledging that the IAF could decide wars meant parting “with a number of anachronistic assumptions ... First of all, that victory equals territory.” Displaying his preference for concepts like EBO and SOD as early as 2001, Halutz believed that “Victory is a matter of consciousness. Airpower affects the adversary’s consciousness significantly.”⁵³

The new doctrine would have disastrous consequences for the IDF in July 2006, just two months after it was signed. Familiar terms like Mission, Commander’s Intent, Task Organization and Tasks were replaced “with a whole new world of Political Directive, Strategic Purpose, System Boundaries, operational boundaries, Campaign’s Organizing Theme, Opposite System Rationale, ... and so on.”⁵⁴ As one Israeli general said after the 2006 War, “using terms like ‘swarmed, multi-dimensional, simultaneous attack’ in orders issued by the division’s commander came at the expense of a simple and

⁵² Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 26.

⁵³ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 22.

⁵⁴ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 26.

straightforward definition of objectives and missions.”⁵⁵ The new doctrine eliminated the corps formation, and plans were put in place to eliminate the division. Units the size of a brigade remained in place, but brigadier generals “were to command an element that when translated from Hebrew means ‘*campaign trend*’ or ‘*operational trend*.’”⁵⁶

A former IDF Chief of Staff lamented that “‘*Leverages and effects*’ applied against Hezbollah proved ineffective in bringing the organization ‘*to acknowledge*’ its bad conditions within a few days. The IDF nevertheless concluded that the ‘*leverages and effects*’ should merely be improved.”⁵⁷

Halutz’s preference for airpower while head of the IDF had another negative impact - “he was so confident that airpower could do the job alone, or almost alone, that he did not provide the government with any real alternative plan until the latest stage of the war.”⁵⁸ No less telling was that with an air-centric doctrine, and a military chief who did not envision a large role for ground forces in future war, resources available for ground forces began to dry up.⁵⁹

The IDF’s long engagement in the West Bank and Gaza required a substantial investment in manpower and resources, and left Israeli ground units “stretched to the limit.”⁶⁰ Israeli operations during the Palestinian uprising were manpower intensive, requiring substantial numbers of infantry and paramilitary police, but relatively few artillery pieces, tanks or mechanized units. Those armor units that were committed were much more likely to be driving an armored bulldozer than a tank. The use of specialized

⁵⁵ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 33.

⁵⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 28.

⁵⁷ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 33.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 22.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁰ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 27.

ground combat units as provisional infantry, coupled with a high operational tempo, meant a significant portion of the IDF, especially reservists, could go “years without training on their armored vehicles.”⁶¹ One reserve armored battalion commander noted that “To be in top form, a tank reservist needs a five day refresher exercise each year. Most hardly got that in the course of three years, others in the space of five, and yet others not at all.”⁶² The lack of attention to armor training had predictable resource implications for the equipment that sat unused – in the summer of 2006 Israeli tanks were “lacking active protection systems, smoke obscuration equipment, etc.”⁶³

Concurrent with the lack of individual training, unit training for operations other than COIN declined precipitously. Israeli manpower requirements in the West Bank and Gaza meant that “training was focused on preparing units for ... counterterrorist and small unit war, not for conventional operations by large ground formations.”⁶⁴ Under the new doctrine the brigade would be the largest ground unit, resulting in an institutional mindset that “did not see training above the brigade level as important, and therefore did not invest in it.”⁶⁵ Without large scale conventional maneuvers, senior officers had no opportunity to practice their craft, meaning “Brigade generals were under-trained, and commanders above the brigade level did not command their units in training for years.”⁶⁶

Without a solid training regimen to fall back on, Israeli conventional forces had to rely on their individual combat experience. This experience was in short supply, as “fighting terrorists and suicide bombers had become the IDF’s sole source of combat

⁶¹ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 27.

⁶² Ibid, 27.

⁶³ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 23.

⁶⁴ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 42.

⁶⁵ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 28.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 27.

experience”⁶⁷ Lessons-learned in the West Bank and Gaza were not necessarily applicable to the fight that loomed in Lebanon.

“In the territories the IDF used to protect soldiers from small arms fire by sheltering them in the houses of the local population. Based on this experience, in Lebanon soldiers were ordered to take shelter in a similar manner, ignoring the fact that Hizballah was using sophisticated anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs). Consequently, in the village of Debel, where 110 reserve soldiers stayed in one house, 9 soldiers were killed and 31 were wounded when Hizballah destroyed the house using ATGMs.”⁶⁸

With minimal combat experience of their own to fall back on, IDF leaders may have leveraged lessons they gleaned from their American allies, who had recent fighting experience in the Middle East. One such lesson may have been derived from American “Thunder Runs” into Baghdad, as U.S. forces approached the Iraqi capital. Originally designed as raids that would disrupt an Iraqi army attempt to withdraw into an urban “fortress Baghdad,” in reality each successive Thunder Run ended up occupying important objectives, with the final run securing downtown Baghdad.⁶⁹ Israeli doctrine captured the original intent of the American operation, but failed to recognize what had happened in actual execution. In pre-war planning “IDF troops were supposed to refrain from capturing territory in Southern Lebanon. Instead they were to ‘take control’ over the area and to destroy Katyusha rockets via precision fire and raids by small units.”⁷⁰ The IDF theory of “controlling” territory with firepower, instead of capturing territory with maneuver, would have significant implications in the 2006 War.

⁶⁷ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

⁶⁹ Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II*. New York, New York: Pantheon Press, 2006, 374-393.

⁷⁰ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 28.

Prior to OPERATION GALILEE, the subject of IDF casualties had not been a divisive issue for the Israeli public.⁷¹ Historical public support for Israel's wars in the face of casualties was most likely due to the perception that they were wars for national survival. Following their 1982 invasion of Lebanon, however, Israeli leaders came to understand that "Israeli popular opinion, like that of other Western Societies in similar wars, gradually turned against protracted ... intervention." When the military was used for a war of choice vice survival, "the death of IDF troops had a corrosive political impact in Jewish society."⁷² In concert with the IDF, successive Israeli governments developed a fixation on avoiding casualties, to the extent that "IDF commanders have become accustomed to thinking that nothing was more important than sparing the lives of the troops, even if that came at the expense of accomplishing their missions."⁷³ During the 2006 War, individual casualties were reported directly to the Chief of Staff, who later admitted a "no casualties" approach "as result of the IDF's preoccupation with terror challenges."⁷⁴ In the end, Israel's fascination with airpower and precision weapons, coupled with a new doctrine and years of focus on police actions in the occupied territories, set the stage for "a witch's brew of high tech fantasies and basic unpreparedness."⁷⁵

In contrast to Israel, the preparations made by Hezbollah between 2000 and 2006 materially improved their ability to fight their most likely opponent. In contravention of the conventional wisdom that a military force should not prepare to fight its last war,

⁷¹ Gil Meron, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 177.

⁷² Henricksen, *The Israeli Approach to Irregular Warfare and Implications for the United States*, 33.

⁷³ Kober, "The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?" 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 11.

⁷⁵ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 37.

Hezbollah designed its defense of southern Lebanon based on Israel's actions in OPERATIONS ACCOUNTABILITY and GRAPES OF WRATH. Specifically, Hezbollah's operational design counteracted IDF precision weapons and standoff firepower, while simultaneously attempting to inflict as many military and civilian casualties on Israel as possible. This design was based on a "presumption that Israel no longer had a tolerance for war and its inevitable butcher's bill."⁷⁶ As Lebanon expert Andrew Exum noted, "Hizballah spent the years from 2000 until 2006 thinking about the war in tactical terms. That is, Hizballah thought about its defense of southern Lebanon with an eye towards how the IDF would fight, and what weapons, personnel, fortifications, and tactics would be needed to stop the IDF or at the very least slow its progress."⁷⁷ Hezbollah understood that in any future conflict with Israel, the organization's first imperative was merely to survive. Beyond survival, Hezbollah wanted to maintain its arms, continue to be seen as the defender of southern Lebanon, and maintain its influence in Lebanese politics. To accomplish these goals, Hezbollah sought and received advanced military equipment from Iran and Syria, established a fortified defensive zone in southern Lebanon, and built fortifications that would enable them to sustain rocket launches into Israel for an indefinite amount of time. Based on the success they had in maintaining rocket attacks into Israel during GRAPES OF WRATH, Hezbollah sought to "to retain the capacity to continue firing rockets into Israel in spite of any and all retaliatory measures undertaken by the IDF in a bid to weaken the Israeli public's resolve for the confrontation."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 16.

⁷⁷ Exum, *Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment*, 3.

⁷⁸ Nicholas Blanford, "Deconstructing Hizballah's Surprise Military Prowess," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 2006, 23.

Hezbollah ultimately acquired three classes of weapons for the rocket units it formed between 2000 and 2006 (see figure 1). Long-range Iranian supplied Zelzal and Nazeat rockets were located in central Lebanon, and kept under the operational control of Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut.⁷⁹ Medium-range rockets, primarily deployed on vehicle-mounted launchers, were kept in the vicinity of the Litani River. Finally, a "vast arsenal" of short-range Katyusha rockets were located south of the Litani River, right up to the border with Israel. The quantities of rockets was enormous - "By 2006, Iran and Syria had supplied Hezbollah with an astonishing 12,000 to 13,000 short-, medium-, and long-range ground to ground missiles."⁸⁰ The vast majority of these rockets were short range, and Hezbollah developed ingenious means to protect and employ them.

Figure 1. Hizbollah Rockets⁸¹			
SYSTEM	RANGE (km)	WARHEAD WEIGHT (kg)	SUPPLIER
Zelzal-2	210	600	Iran
Nazeat	100-140	1,300(6)/250(10)	Iran
Fajr-3	43	45	Iran
Fajr-5	75	90	Iran
302mm	75	100	Syria
220mm	70	Unknown	Syria
122mm	20	30	Iran/Syria
107mm	6	Unknown	Iran/Syria

⁷⁹ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 39.

⁸⁰ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 17.

⁸¹ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 40.

To counteract Israeli firepower, Hezbollah dispersed their short-range missiles across southern Lebanon. Caches of rockets, associated launchers, and launch crews were further protected by vast underground bunkers that the Israelis called “nature reserves.”⁸² The bunkers were constructed secretly, and most escaped detection by both the IDF and the UN mission (UNIFIL) monitoring the border. In one instance, “within view of both the Mediterranean and the Israeli border, a Hizballah position with eighteen inches of concrete overhead cover had been built a mere 20 meters from a UNIFIL position and just 100 meters from an IDF position.”⁸³ One UNIFIL observer remarked, “they must have brought the cement in by the spoonful.”⁸⁴ Several months before the war, an Israeli observation post on the border reported “someone digging under our feet,” but the IDF did not discover the bunker until after the war.⁸⁵ Incredibly, a Hezbollah bunker overlooking the site of the kidnapping that initiated the 2006 fighting “was chanced on by the IDF only towards the end of the war.”⁸⁶ The remarkable engineering properties of the bunkers may have been the result of North Korean advisors assisting Hezbollah.⁸⁷ Although the IDF gained awareness of the threat, and even prepared mock-ups for training in northern Israel, they had no idea of the sheer number of bunkers (which may have numbered in the “three of dozens, possibly hundreds, scattered throughout southern Lebanon”), nor were they able to locate or target the positions.⁸⁸ The lack of targeting intelligence did not bode well for an Israeli warfighting doctrine based on standoff precision firepower.

⁸² Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 45.

⁸³ Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment*, 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁵ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁷ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 21.

⁸⁸ Blanford, Nicholas, and Shaab, Alma, “Inside Hezbollah’s Hidden Bunkers,” *Time* (March 2007), <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1604529,00.html> (accessed December 11, 2008).

With bunkers protecting their short-range rocket force from IDF air and artillery, Hezbollah needed the ability to blunt an Israeli ground thrust against the “nature reserves.” To accomplish this, they fortified the hilltop villages in southern Lebanon, mined likely avenues of approach, and sought large quantities of anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) from Iran and Syria (see figure 2).⁸⁹

Figure 2. Hizballah Antitank Guided Missiles⁹⁰			
SYSTEM	RANGE	ARMOR PENETRATION	GUIDANCE
Kornet AT-14	3.5 mi	1,100-1,200 mm	laser
Kornet AT-5	75 mi	800mm	wire
Metis-M AT-13	80 m to 1.5 km	460-850 mm	wire
Sagger AT-3	3 km	200 mm	wire
Fagot AT-4	70 m to 2 km	400 mm	wire
Milan	400 m to 2 km	352 mm	wire
TOW	600m to 3.7 km	800 mm	wire

The most important of these defensive measures was the Hezbollah investment in ATGMs. As one observer noted, “the July War will forever be the war of the anti-tank missile.”⁹¹ Unlike Western militaries, where anti-armor capability is embedded in conventional units, Hezbollah used their best-trained and equipped commando forces to operate advanced ATGM systems.⁹² The organization also developed ATGM TTPs that

⁸⁹ Exum, *Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment*, 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 40.

⁹¹ Ibid, 5.

⁹² Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War*, 39.

caught the IDF by surprise. The majority of IDF ground casualties, and tank losses would ultimately be due to Hezbollah ATGMs.⁹³

To fine-tune their preparation for a future fight with Israel, Hezbollah also leveraged their state sponsors to develop a rudimentary anti-ship capacity, an electronic warfare capability, and an increasingly sophisticated command and control system.⁹⁴ They organized the battlespace with unit boundaries; higher level headquarters communicated with Beirut using fiber-optic landlines and “a closed cellular phone system,” while lower echelon units communicated with handheld Motorola radios.⁹⁵ The organization was assessed to have a “hierarchical, differentiated command and control” system, which allowed them to “hold in some places but yield in others, counterattack in some locations but withdraw elsewhere.”⁹⁶ Where in the past Hezbollah had confronted the IDF with self-contained, independent guerilla cells, in 2006 they were better prepared to coordinate their forces across southern Lebanon

CONDUCT OF THE 2006 WAR

On 12 July, seven IDF reservists departed in High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) for a patrol along the Lebanese border. It was the last day of their mobilization, and they were looking forward to returning to their families and regular civilian jobs. In addition to their impending demobilization, the soldiers’ attention, like the rest of Israel, was likely focused on the recent abduction of a soldier in

⁹³ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 46.

⁹⁴ EW, C2: Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 18-21; Anti-ship: Blanford, “Deconstructing Hizbullah’s Surprise Military Prowess,” 23;

⁹⁵ Blanford, “Deconstructing Hizbullah’s Surprise Military Prowess,” 23, and Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment*, 5.

⁹⁶ Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for the Army and Defense Policy*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008, 59.

the Gaza Strip. IDF SOP called for three HMMWVs and four occupants in each vehicle for a patrol on the border, but the soldiers departed with just two vehicles, one with an empty seat. As the patrol passed a piece of low ground known as “RP 105” that was below the line of sight of IDF observation posts, a Hezbollah commando team engaged the vehicles with ATGMs and machine gun fire, disabling both vehicles. The three IDF soldiers in the trail HMMWV were killed by the initial burst of fire, and another three were wounded in the lead vehicle. The Hezbollah team emerged from their ambush position, took two soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, and quickly recrossed the border into Lebanon. Hezbollah mortar fire hit targets along the border to add confusion and mask their retreat.⁹⁷

In retrospect, the IDF soldiers had reason to display a great deal more caution on their fateful patrol. After the Israeli soldier had been kidnapped in Gaza on 25 June, Israeli intelligence had issued a high alert from 27 June to 10 July for the portion of the Lebanese border that included RP 105.⁹⁸ Although there was no formal patrol brief (an omission that violated unit SOP), Sergeant Goldwasser and his men were told that the security fence had potentially been breached at 0220 that morning.⁹⁹ The patrol route was a known risk area, and had in fact been off-limits to vehicle patrols during the heightened alert.¹⁰⁰ The IDF also knew that Hezbollah planned to abduct soldiers. Secretary General Nasrallah had openly declared his intent to do so in 2006, in order to free Lebanese prisoners held in Israeli jails.¹⁰¹ Israel had established a precedent in 2004, allowing Hezbollah to trade the bodies of three kidnapped Israeli soldiers for 400

⁹⁷ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 2-4.

⁹⁸ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 33.

⁹⁹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 57.

Lebanese prisoners.¹⁰² There had been at least two abduction attempts in 2005, both of which ended poorly for Hezbollah. Although the attempts were unsuccessful, the training and capability of the Hezbollah commandos impressed the IDF.¹⁰³

In the immediate aftermath of the abduction, the IDF initiated a series of standard operating procedures that included mortar and artillery fire against known Hezbollah positions, and the dispatch of a “Nahal” force with a Merkava tank to the ambush site.¹⁰⁴ Advancing to seize high ground immediately across the border, the tank struck an improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Hezbollah, instantly killing all four crewmen. The accompanying ground troops came under Hezbollah mortar fire, which killed an additional IDF soldier. For an Israeli government accustomed to the less lethal environment of the West Bank and Gaza, and one that believed casualties would not be tolerated by the populace, the death of eight soldiers, and the abduction of an additional two in one day “provided an easy platform for belligerent declarations and hasty decisions that ultimately led to war.”¹⁰⁵

The IDF had two contingency plans prepared for initiating action against Hezbollah. The first plan, called ICE BREAKER, envisioned a short duration air campaign against preplanned Hezbollah targets. The second plan, MEY MAROM, was yet another version of past Israeli operations to drive terrorists north of the Litani River. The plans were complementary, and allowed the IDF “to simultaneously activate ICE BREAKER and call and deploy the [IDF] reserves for MEY MAROM, and after 48-72

¹⁰² Maj Sharon T. Moore, “Road to War,” Joint Center for Operational Analysis Journal, Volume X, issue 1 (December 2007), 14.

¹⁰³ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 15.

hours of air campaign, to either exit the hostilities or activate MEY MAROM.”¹⁰⁶ Chief of Staff Halutz recommended initiating the air campaign, but as a stand-alone action.¹⁰⁷ The three military options presented to the cabinet by Defense Minister Peretz, “attack only Hezbollah; attack Hezbollah and targets in Syria; attack Hezbollah and the Lebanese infrastructure,” were more indicative of a target list than a military strategy.¹⁰⁸ Peretz, who had only limited military experience, felt that Israel’s objective “was to make Hezbollah regret the day it initiated the war, to feel battered and persecuted.”¹⁰⁹

Against this backdrop, the cabinet ministers voted for an air strike against Hezbollah’s long-range missiles, the Beirut International Airport, and roads and bridges inside Lebanon. The infrastructure attacks, ostensibly designed to limit Hezbollah’s movement of the kidnapped soldiers, were also intended to put pressure on the Lebanese Government, and reduce Hezbollah popularity.¹¹⁰ Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, a cabinet minister in the Olmert government, asked what Israel’s next action would be after the airstrikes, but was put off by General Halutz.¹¹¹ No one else in the cabinet thought past the immediate prospect of retaliatory air strikes; “In retrospect, the ministers seem to have approved the move without seriously considering the implications ... only later did they realize that the IDF had no plans for defeating Hezbollah or countering short-range Katyusha fire.”¹¹² Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni thought the air strikes would last a day, following which Israel would seek a political solution.¹¹³ In retrospect, “on

¹⁰⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 36-37.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 80.

¹¹⁰ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 86.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 85.

¹¹² Ibid, 87.

¹¹³ Ibid, 93.

the night of July 12, the Israeli government made the decision to go to war ... although it was not sufficiently clear to the majority of participants who attended the meeting.”¹¹⁴

The first night’s strike on Hezbollah’s long-range Fajr missiles proved to be highly successful. Whether all the rockets were destroyed, or Tehran restrained Hezbollah from using Iranian-provided weapons on Israeli cities, the long range rocket arsenal was not employed in the July War.¹¹⁵ Halutz declared, “all the long-range rockets have been destroyed. We’ve won the war.”¹¹⁶ At that point in time, the IDF Chief of Staff was close to being correct. Hezbollah was surprised by the scale and ferocity of the Israeli response, and was willing to negotiate.¹¹⁷

“On 14 July the Lebanese Government asked for a ceasefire. In Clausewitzian terms, once the IAF completed its missions in the initial stages of the war, thanks to high quality intelligence regarding Hizbollah’s strategic weapons, and before it exposed its short-handedness vis-à-vis the short range rockets and the poor performance of the IDF’s ground forces, Israel reached the culminating point of the attack.”¹¹⁸

Still without clear policy objectives, Israel escalated the conflict by attacking the Dahia neighborhood in Beirut, which housed Hezbollah’s headquarters and Nasrallah’s personal residence.¹¹⁹

Prime Minister Olmert did not state Israeli policy objectives until 17 July, five days into the conflict. In an address to the nation, he announced that Israel required the “return of the kidnapped soldiers, an unconditional cease fire, deployment of the Lebanese army in the entire south of the country, and the ouster of Hezbollah from the

¹¹⁴ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 86-87.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 91-92.

¹¹⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 37.

¹¹⁷ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 109.

¹¹⁸ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 4.

¹¹⁹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 99.

south according to [UN] Resolution 1559.”¹²⁰ Following the speech Israeli media praised “Olmert for his coolness under fire,” and his approval rating soared.¹²¹ Unfortunately, the Prime Minister’s objectives seemed wholly designed to raise his popularity, rather than deal with the crisis at hand. Taken as a whole, Olmert’s terms required the destruction of Hezbollah - a policy objective difficult to achieve with an air campaign. Regarding the individual objectives, General Halutz had made clear to the Prime Minister that “he did not believe Israel could guarantee that it could retrieve the two kidnapped soldiers, deliver an irretrievable blow to Hezbollah, or stop the Katyusha rocket attacks.”¹²² Olmert’s announcement hardened Hezbollah’s posture.

“Until around July 17 the organization was prepared to make serious concessions in order to end the conflict. They suffered a heavy beating in Israel’s opening round. But the chance was lost because of Olmert’s public diplomacy. Hezbollah are not fools. They understood that the two stipulations that Olmert presented (the return of kidnapped soldiers and the death blow to Hezbollah) were too high a threshold for ending the war.”¹²³

The Israeli policy also had the effect of defining Hezbollah’s strategy. They merely had to outlast IDF military action while denying Israel as many of their objectives as possible. Hezbollah’s pre-war preparation, specifically their short-range rocket arsenal, would prove pivotal to their strategy. Hezbollah wanted to “maintain a high rate of fire throughout the conflict,” in order break the will of the Israeli public¹²⁴ A side effect of this strategy was that they would hold ground in order to protect their rockets. Importantly, the IDF had no expectation that Hezbollah had discarded their historical guerilla tactics.

¹²⁰ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 107-108.

¹²¹ Ibid, 108.

¹²² Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 15.

¹²³ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 108.

¹²⁴ Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment*, 12.

During the first week of Israeli air attacks Hezbollah fired between 150 and 180 rockets a day into northern Israel.¹²⁵ On 16 July, Hezbollah successfully targeted the Israeli port city of Haifa, killing eight civilians.¹²⁶ By not activating MEY MAROM, Israel was limited to air, artillery and naval gunfire strikes against Hezbollah targets. Instead of recommending additional military options, the IDF merely increased the scale and intensity of standoff weapon strikes. The pace of airstrikes was such that in the July War the IAF flew more sorties than they had in the 1973 War.¹²⁷ The scope of Israeli attacks increased to include attacking lines of supply and destroying bridges in an attempt to interdict resupply of Hezbollah rockets. The IDF, however, failed to realize the extent to which Hezbollah had prepositioned and stockpiled their arsenal. Post-war analysis suggests that IAF strikes only accounted for a seven percent decrease in Hezbollah weapons stocks.¹²⁸ The Israeli application of airpower was not producing the necessary effects to support policy objectives, nor was it preventing Hezbollah rocket strikes on Israel. IDF intelligence joined General Halutz in suggesting that the bombing campaign would neither “win the release of the two Israeli soldiers ... nor reduce the militia’s rocket attacks on Israel to fewer than 100 a day.”¹²⁹ Surprisingly, there were only 84 objectives on the IDF’s Northern Command pre-war target list. Five days into the war the IDF “had attacked most of its prescribed targets.”¹³⁰

In order to deflect pressure building within the IDF to call-up the reserves and activate MEY MAROM, General Halutz authorized active duty units on the border to

¹²⁵ Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment*, 12.

¹²⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 38.

¹²⁷ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 23.

¹²⁸ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 38.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 38-39.

¹³⁰ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 109.

make limited raids into Hezbollah controlled territory. In Halutz's mind these raids were "not designed to destroy Hezbollah or its rockets but to craft a '*consciousness of victory*' for the Israelis and a '*cognitive perception of defeat*' for Hezbollah."¹³¹ The first substantial IDF ground forces were committed on the 17th, with the mission of capturing the border town of Maroun al-Ras. Much to the surprise of the IDF commandos, the former hit and run Hezbollah guerillas mounted a tenacious static defense.

The Maglan, an elite IDF special forces unit, led the attack into Maroun al-Ras with just 18 soldiers – a good sized patrol for the occupied territories, but a woefully undersized force for the mission at hand.¹³² Although reinforced throughout the day by additional infantry and four Merkava tanks, by the morning of 18 July the Israelis attacking Maroun al-Ras found themselves cut off, and partially surrounded.¹³³ It took two more days of fighting and the commitment of two additional battalions for the IDF to secure the town. Members of the IDF General Staff felt that the attacks had been "avoidable blunders, a result of ... acting against the Chief of Staff's expectations."¹³⁴ General Halutz had authorized raids, not rapidly escalating major engagements. The Chief of Staff soon announced that he was "transferring authority for operations across the border from Northern Command to the Operations Branch."¹³⁵ The actions at Maroun al-Ras stung Olmert and Halutz, and led to the call-up of the Israeli reserve component on 21 July.¹³⁶ Amazingly, the reserve call-up was not in preparation for an

¹³¹ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 43.

¹³² Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 132.

¹³³ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 44.

¹³⁴ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 134.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 136.

¹³⁶ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 44.

invasion of Lebanon. Instead, they would mass on the border in order to “disrupt the military logic of Hezbollah.”¹³⁷

Still in search of delivering a “cognitive perception of defeat” to Hezbollah, General Halutz identified a new objective for IDF ground forces. The town of Bint Jbeil, four kilometers north of Maroun al-Ras, was the site of Nasrallah’s victory speech following the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Halutz believed that the town was symbolic, and its capture would “create a spectacle of victory.” With his General Staff having taken control of tactical operations from Northern Command, Halutz ordered the IDF to take Bint Jbeil with a single battalion. The fighting that ensued was a replay of Maroun al-Ras, with 33 casualties on just the first day. Although the IDF committed additional forces, “even by the close of the war, the town was never entirely secured by the IDF.”¹³⁸

The Olmert government’s initial response to the abductions had been tremendously popular, but missteps in Lebanon and the continued rain of Hezbollah rockets greatly reduced popular support. Casualties caused by Hezbollah defenders and rocket attacks spawned “growing disappointment among Israel’s politicians, public, and media with the IDF’s conduct of the war, and an almost paralyzing fear of further losses.”¹³⁹ IDF casualties “became the main topic of conversation among politicians and the public at large.”¹⁴⁰ Internationally, Israel had started the war with unprecedented support for its actions, including tacit support from the Lebanese government and Sunni Arab countries. Top leaders in Lebanon “asked the United States to see to it that Israel

¹³⁷ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 45.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 45-47.

¹³⁹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 136.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 137.

did not end the war after only a few days.”¹⁴¹ The Siniora government in Lebanon had a “heartfelt hope that Israel would help rid them” of Hezbollah.¹⁴² Without voicing explicit support for Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan all condemned Hezbollah. The Saudi foreign minister described Hezbollah’s abduction of IDF soldiers as “unexpected, dishonorable and irresponsible. They will put the region back years and are utterly unacceptable.”¹⁴³ Israeli policy decisions and IDF ineptness helped evaporate the most benign international operating environment Israel had ever enjoyed.

With Israel’s unwitting help, Hezbollah initiated an impressive strategic communications campaign to change the world’s perception of them from dangerous aggressors to aggrieved freedom fighters. Although they initially operated in a hostile information environment, Hezbollah realized that “The battle for perception dominance was just as critical as the strategic strike competition.”¹⁴⁴ The strategic communications fight can be divided into three phases.

In phase one, world, Arab, and Lebanese opinion was against Hezbollah. Hezbollah had initiated the war, and had dragged an unwilling Lebanon into an unwanted war with Israel. Although there was no clean transition to the second phase, Hezbollah began to gain the upper hand in strategic communications on the second night of the air war, when the IDF attacked the Dahia neighborhood. Following the strikes in Beirut, the IAF facilitated Hezbollah’s information campaign with stepped-up attacks on non-Hezbollah civilian infrastructure, in part because they had run through their pre-war target list. Despite evidence of direct manipulation of the media by Hezbollah, the

¹⁴¹ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 98.

¹⁴² Ibid, 98

¹⁴³ Ibid, 103.

¹⁴⁴ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 38.

images of dead, injured and displaced civilians were fodder for television cameras. The “erosion of international support throughout the conflict was predictable as media pictures in the Arab world and Europe showed Israel hitting civilian buildings at the edges of Beirut.”¹⁴⁵ Refugee flows became another tool for Hezbollah propaganda. In a massive non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO), “the United States and European countries set about extricating tens of thousands of their nationals,” with attendant media coverage.¹⁴⁶ The backdrop for media images of the NEO invariably included pillars of smoke rising over Beirut.

The third and final phase of the strategic communications fight started with the perception that Hezbollah was beating the IDF. Although they enjoyed their share of hard fought successes on the battlefield, Hezbollah’s fighters were still suffering at the hands of the IDF. Nonetheless, Hezbollah recognized that “perception matters more than results in the physical battlefield.”¹⁴⁷ Of particular note is the choreography of a successful attack on an Israeli warship off the coast of Beirut.

“In a telephone speech that was also broadcast live on Israeli television, Nasrallah asked the people of Beirut to look to the west, to the Mediterranean ... ‘*The vessel that bombed Beirut will now be demolished,*’ he promised. A few minutes earlier, a C-802 missile ... slammed into the Israeli missile boat *Hanit* ... hundreds of people went to the coast that evening. ‘*This was the turning point in Lebanese public opinion. We saw flames on the sea and realized he had spoken the truth ... Nasrallah kept his word ... in the following days you sensed Lebanese solidarity.*’”¹⁴⁸

Despite Hezbollah’s success in the information arena, and the public outcry in Israel over casualties, General Halutz maintained his faith in airpower, and remained

¹⁴⁵ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 97.

¹⁴⁷ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 53.

¹⁴⁸ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 101-102.

opposed to a general invasion of Lebanon. His strategy remained to “enter and pull out,” for the purpose of “controlling instead of capturing territory.”¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, with so many units on the border, the raid strategy resulted in an ever-increasing trickle of IDF forces into Lebanon. By 5 August, there were 10,000 Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon, versus only 3,000 Hezbollah fighters.¹⁵⁰ Most of these soldiers were poorly trained and equipped reservists, who were not prepared for Hezbollah’s hardened fighters.¹⁵¹ As one observer noted, “*In one day in 1982 they [the IDF] reached Beirut; here in six or seven days, they couldn’t go more than a few miles.*”¹⁵²

Israel’s relative freedom of action evaporated on 11 August when the UN Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 1701.¹⁵³ Knowing that a cease-fire would follow the UN resolution within 48 hours, Olmert and his cabinet had already made the decision to try and gain some advantage before the war ended. In “one of the most bizarre episodes of the war,” while Tzipi Livni was negotiating the text of the resolution, Olmert approved an operation that would “give Hezbollah and the Arab world a taste of its [Israel’s] strength.”¹⁵⁴ The Israeli leadership decided to expand the fight, “ordering their divisions north to the Litani.”¹⁵⁵ As Nicholas Blanford noted in his assessment, “there was little obvious strategic or tactical utility in the 60-hour operation,” given that Israel had already made the decision to accept Resolution 1701.¹⁵⁶

In execution, the final Israeli offensive fared no better than the attacks on Maroun al-Ras or Bint Jbeil. Hezbollah ATGM teams ambushed 24 IDF tanks crossing Wadi al-

¹⁴⁹ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 48, and Kober, 8-9.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 50.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 49.

¹⁵² Ibid, 48.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 194.

¹⁵⁵ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 51-52.

¹⁵⁶ Blanford, “Deconstructing Hizbullah’s Surprise Military Prowess,” 26.

Saluka, resulting in the damage or destruction of 11 Merkavas, and the death of 12 soldiers.¹⁵⁷ In another phase of the attack, Hezbollah ATGMs impacted a building sheltering 50 Israeli paratroopers, killing nine and wounding 31.¹⁵⁸ Hezbollah also shot down an IDF CH-53 heavy lift helicopter, killing all occupants.¹⁵⁹ In the end, over 20 percent of IDF killed in action were due to the final offensive.¹⁶⁰ Hezbollah signaled the ineffectiveness of the IDF effort by firing “250 rockets into Israel in the closing hours before the cease-fire.”¹⁶¹

Significantly, Hezbollah abandoned 11 of the 13 principles of war that had guided them prior to the 2000 Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Where previously they avoided set-piece battle and emphasized protecting their own force, by 2006 they actively sought to engage IDF units. As Hezbollah leader Nasrallah pointed out after the war, “The resistance withstood the attack and fought back. It did not wage a guerilla war either ... it was not a regular army but was not a guerilla in the traditional sense either. It was something in between. This is the new model.”¹⁶² This “new model” has been articulated as “Hybrid War.”

¹⁵⁷ Blanford, “Deconstructing Hizbullah’s Surprise Military Prowess,” 26, and Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 54.

¹⁵⁸ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 52.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 56.

¹⁶⁰ Blanford, “Deconstructing Hizbullah’s Surprise Military Prowess,” 26.

¹⁶¹ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 56.

¹⁶² Ibid, 22.

HYBRID WAR

“HYBRID WAR” DEFINED

Echoing several speeches he had given in the preceeding months, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wrote a 2009 article for *Foreign Affairs* in which he warned of “hybrid scenarios” that “combine the lethality of state conflict with fanatical and protracted nature of irregular warfare.”¹⁶³ The concept of “Hybrid War” as defined by defense analyst Frank Hoffman offers utility in explaining the “something in between ... the new model” that Secretary General Nasrallah touted as Hezbollah’s design for the 2006 War. In his work for the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Hoffman theorizes that in Hybrid War:

“Conventional, irregular and catastrophic terrorist challenges will not be distinct styles; they will all be present in some form. The blurring of the modes of war, the blurring of who fights, and what technologies are brought to bear, produces a wide range of variety and complexity that we call *Hybrid Warfare*. Hybrid Wars can be conducted by states and a variety of non-state actors. *Hybrid Wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.*”¹⁶⁴ (Italics in the original)

He goes on to compare Hybrid War to other paradigms of future warfare, including Fourth Generation Warfare, Compound Wars, Unrestricted Warfare, and the 2005 National Defense Strategy. He ultimately postulates that the other warfare models generally fail to account for global trends in warfare, and specifically do not account for Hezbollah’s conduct of the 2006 War. The Hybrid War concept describes a future where “multiple types of warfare will be used simultaneously by flexible and sophisticated

¹⁶³ Robert Gates, “A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2009), 34.

¹⁶⁴ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 14.

adversaries who understand that successful conflict takes on a variety of forms that are designed to fit one's goals at that particular time.”¹⁶⁵

Hoffman cites several elements of the 2006 War that identify Hezbollah as “the clearest example of a modern Hybrid challenger.”¹⁶⁶ Foremost among these elements is the state-like military capabilities possessed by the terrorists. From advanced ATGMs to long-range rockets and anti-ship missiles, Hezbollah indeed wielded weaponry that normally belongs to nation-states. Not only did the organization acquire these weapons, they also developed TTPs for their employment, including volley fire of ATGMs and remote launching of short range rockets to take advantage of creases in Israel's battlefield surveillance. Additionally they demonstrated an ability to utilize other elements of power, particularly strategic and operational level information operations. Finally, Hezbollah was able to integrate regular and irregular fighters on the battlefield. These fighters did not just share the same battlespace, they truly integrated their operations to achieve tactical advantages.¹⁶⁷

Not all analysts of the 2006 War agree with Hoffman's premise that the 2006 War heralds a new type of warfare. In their analysis of the conflict, Biddle and Friedman assert that far from being revolutionary, “Hezbollah appears to have attempted a remarkably conventional system of tactics and theater operational art.” The most notable aspect of the July War was “how much the 2006 campaign differed from terrorist or guerilla warfare ... and how conventional and state-like the fighting was.”¹⁶⁸ Israeli analyst Avi Kober offers an even more candid assessment:

¹⁶⁵ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 35.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 35-41.

¹⁶⁸ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare*, xii-xiv.

“From a theoretical point of view, the Second Lebanon War is no novelty. Asymmetric conflicts in which the weaker side was using various force multipliers in order to balance its weakness vis-à-vis the stronger side have been the most pervasive type of conflict in the international system since World War II. Recent literature on Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW), Complex Irregular Warfare, or Hybrid War (i.e. a combination of conventional and nontraditional wars) – describing the weaker side’s new sources of power and strength – hardly offers any new insights on asymmetric conflicts but instead, reflects the fact that asymmetry could take on different forms. Changes on the battlefield and the search for new force multipliers, such as innovative or particularly disruptive technologies or new evasion tactics, have always taken place and should not be viewed as fundamental transformations.”¹⁶⁹

One IAF officer pointed out that perhaps Hezbollah’s success was not primarily a result of combat prowess, but more a result of superior thought and preparation prior to the war. “Hizbollah designed a war in which presumably Israel could only choose which soft underbelly to expose: the one whereby it avoids a ground operation and exposes its home front to vulnerability, or the one whereby it enters Lebanon and sustains the loss of soldiers in ongoing ground-based attrition with a guerilla organization.”¹⁷⁰ According to this point of view, it was not a hybrid opponent that stymied the IDF, it was the lack of Israeli strategic planning.

Nonetheless, there are aspects of the 2006 War that are unique, and for which the Hybrid War concept provides explanatory power. The first such aspect is that “... non-state groups are increasingly gaining access to the kinds of weapons that were once the exclusive preserve of states.”¹⁷¹ Another is the willingness of opponents to use “extensive refugee flows, sexual violence, and transnational criminal aspects” to

¹⁶⁹ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 7.

¹⁷⁰ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 21.

¹⁷¹ Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today*. New York, New York:Random House, 2006, 472.

accomplish their ends.¹⁷² A final aspect was articulated by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld when he said “... in the future, the most capable opponents may seek to combine truly disruptive capacity with traditional, irregular or catastrophic forms of warfare.”¹⁷³ The key point of the Hybrid War construct is not just that future conflicts will see opponents combine aspects of conventional, unconventional and catastrophic warfare, but that opponents will craft these combinations by design, not by accident.

One can identify a few areas where the Hybrid War definition needs to be extended to provide greater clarity. It seems likely that hybrid opponents need some form of state sponsorship in order to gain access to the types and quantities of weapons that provide them with state-like lethality. Al Qaeda would certainly like to acquire weapons of mass destruction, but without a state sponsor they have not demonstrated an ability to do so. The Mahdi Army in Iraq displayed some hybrid characteristics in 2005-2006, but possessed troubling lethality only when they received advanced weapons, training, and explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) from Iran. Because of their advanced weaponry, hybrid opponents also have greater need of sanctuary than traditional insurgents do. Ultimately what makes the Hybrid War construct interesting is the idea of the simultaneous use of all elements of power (economic, informational, diplomatic and military), including those that are anathema to Western states (rape, brutality and criminality) in support of blurred tactical, operational, and strategic objectives.

¹⁷² Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 17.

¹⁷³ Donald Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005), 4.

RELEVANCE OF THE HYBRID WAR MODEL AND THE 2006 WAR

There are easily identifiable similarities between the 2006 War and the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban and Hezbollah draw their legitimacy and support from the local populace, and both are armed political groups operating within the borders of a sovereign country. Those sovereign countries are nominally aligned with the west, and are strategically important due to their geographic proximity to ongoing campaigns in the Global War on Terror. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, however, cannot be classified as a Hybrid War when weighed against either the definition, or the example provided by Hezbollah in 2006. The variance between the situation on the ground in Afghanistan and the Hybrid War model provides insights as to why the Taliban movement operates as a traditional insurgency, and suggests strategies to prevent it from moving into the hybrid realm.

Unlike Hezbollah's relationship with Iran and Syria, the Taliban currently operate without a state sponsor. While they may receive support from rogue members of the Pakistani intelligence community, the Taliban cannot become a hybrid force without the advanced weaponry that would give them "state-like lethality." Interestingly, while Hezbollah is dependent on monetary support from its state sponsors, the Taliban have their own funding stream. Poppies grown in Afghanistan drive the opium trade, and the Taliban are using that trade to generate revenue. The hybrid model warns that "the disruptive component of Hybrid Wars does not come from high-end revolutionary technology, but from criminality."¹⁷⁴ Where Hezbollah receives support from ideologically like-minded sponsors, the Taliban may only have to find a business partner

¹⁷⁴ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, p29.

in order to lay claim to advanced weapons. This comparison also suggests the potential strategic importance of combating poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

The Taliban do not currently possess a conventional capability, and are thus unable to “incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence, and criminal disorder.”¹⁷⁵ While it is significant that the Taliban do practice two of the three modes of warfare, the conventional component is ultimately required for an insurgency to be successful. As noted by Thomas Hammes, “If the strategic goal is the absolute destruction of the target nation ... there will have to be a final campaign to achieve that goal.”¹⁷⁶ Hezbollah possessed a conventional warfare capability in 2006, as was demonstrated by their tenacious defense of border villages, their concentration of forces, and in that they sought concealment from terrain vice intermingling with civilians.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, Hezbollah has eschewed the terrorist model in favor of a conventional posture. When “suicide attacks ceased to feature in Hezbollah operations as its tactics and methods grew more sophisticated,” the organization was becoming a mature hybrid opponent.¹⁷⁸ Thus, one objective for coalition forces in Afghanistan should be to prevent the Taliban from fielding a conventional capability. Rephrased, a Taliban conventional capability would be a major indicator that the movement believes they are strong enough to destroy the Afghan central government.

There is one additional lesson to be gleaned from comparing the 2006 War with the ongoing fight in Afghanistan. Prior to 2006, Hezbollah maintained the initiative in

¹⁷⁵ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 14.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*. St Paul, Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2004., 211.

¹⁷⁷ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare*, xiii.

¹⁷⁸ Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment*, p2.

their struggle with Israel, and could decide when and where they wanted to strike. For their part, Israel generally ignored their Lebanese opponents unless the terrorists committed an attack. In the event of a conflict, the actual fighting usually occurred inside Hezbollah's Lebanon sanctuary, on terrain of their choosing. The U. S., on the other hand, is actively pursuing the Taliban. Combat actions take place primarily outside their sanctuary in Pakistan. If the Taliban stay inside their Pakistan sanctuary, they lose – they have to show up and fight in Afghanistan. This comparison suggests both that maintaining the initiative against the Taliban is a key operational objective, and there are serious dangers associated with allowing the Taliban to retain a sanctuary in Pakistan.

LESSONS-LEARNED FOR THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER

POLICY STRATEGY MATCH

*Israeli decisionmaking seemed to be plagued by a lack of clarity on Israeli objectives, an inability to formulate a strategy to achieve those objectives, and a failure to devise an operational plan that supported that strategy. Israel proved incapable of defining a relationship between tactical military moves and strategic political objectives.*¹⁷⁹

David Makovsky and Jeffrey White

Carl von Clausewitz wrote that “the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish ... the kind of war they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.”¹⁸⁰ The Israeli leadership in July of 2006 did not understand the nature of the war on which they were embarking. Indeed, they initially did not even know it was a war. IDF Chief of Staff Halutz thought that Israeli actions were “a retaliatory attack, not war;” he even instructed the General Staff “to refrain from relating to the operation as a war.”¹⁸¹ Only former Prime Minister Shimon Peres had the foresight to “urge the Cabinet to decide if it was war or not,” but his voice went unheeded.¹⁸²

As he led his country into war, Prime Minister Olmert violated another of Clausewitz’s dictums: “No one starts a war – or rather no one in his senses ought to do so – without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.”¹⁸³ On 12 July, the Israeli Cabinet met to discuss retaliatory

¹⁷⁹ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

¹⁸¹ Kober, “The Israeli Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” 9.

¹⁸² Ibid, 10.

¹⁸³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 579.

options. The nation's leaders discussed the need to take decisive action, and specific targets that could be attacked. What was *not* discussed was overall political objectives and comprehensive military courses of action that would support the attainment of those objectives.¹⁸⁴ As was noted in the Winograd Commission report, "The decision made on the night of July 12th – to react with immediate and substantive military action ... limited Israel's range of options."¹⁸⁵ These options included a short, retaliatory blow against Hezbollah, or a "large ground operation" to drive Hezbollah out of southern Lebanon.¹⁸⁶ Israel's political leadership equivocated between these two options for the duration of the war. Worse, IDF leadership did not make a case for, or even acknowledge, either option.

Olmert and Halutz were clear in how they wanted to conduct the war – with airpower – but they failed to define what they wanted to achieve until five days after hostilities commenced. When finally defined, the objectives greatly exceeded the military resources that the government was willing to apply. What developed was a mismatch between the desired end state - the destruction of Hezbollah, and the means to accomplish that end - targeted use of airpower and standoff weapons to punish Hezbollah. The destruction of Hezbollah would have required a massive ground invasion of southern Lebanon, but "Israel did not have a strategy to obtain its ultimate objective of delivering an unrecoverable blow to Hizballah and did not use sufficient manpower and firepower on the ground early on to obtain the necessary territorial objective."¹⁸⁷ By defining unattainable objectives, the government created "unrealistic public expectations

¹⁸⁴ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 78-86.

¹⁸⁵ Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah Israeli War*, 83.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 83.

¹⁸⁷ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 3.

about the goals of the war, especially when the IDF forewarned the cabinet from the outset that key objectives could not be met.”¹⁸⁸

Halutz did, in fact, warn the war cabinet that the Prime Minister’s goals were too ambitious; “a pivotal question is: why did the political echelon put forward objectives that the IDF said could not be obtained?”¹⁸⁹ Alternately, how could the IDF not offer military options that might achieve the policy objectives? A fully developed plan had been constructed for the eventuality of a fight with Hezbollah, but only portions of that plan were initiated. Cabinet members later complained that at the initial meeting to discuss Israel’s response to the abductions, “The IDF failed to present any tangible plans.”¹⁹⁰ General Halutz described the immediate preparations to attack Hezbollah’s long-range missiles, but “Nobody in the government meeting said: *‘these are the objectives, this is the timetable.’*”¹⁹¹ In the end, “Israel was not capable of defining a relationship between tactical military moves and strategic political objectives.”¹⁹² General Halutz never recognized that the source of Hezbollah’s strength was their ability to attack targets, at will, inside Israel. Even after “1,000 Katyusha’s had fallen on the home front, destroying them was still not being presented as an important objective.”¹⁹³ Halutz’s confusion over how to relate ways and means to achieve strategic ends led to a “slow and hesitant start to a ground offensive, without fully thinking out its objectives.”¹⁹⁴ The fact that the prime minister and defense minister both lacked military experience meant “the problem was compounded by the inability of the Israeli

¹⁸⁸ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 13.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 15.

¹⁹⁰ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 85.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 85.

¹⁹² Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 3.

¹⁹³ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 128.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 135.

government to ask the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) hard questions as it laid out tactical military approaches that did not take into account the political realities facing Israel.”¹⁹⁵

As the historical overview points out, this was not the first example of a strategy-policy mismatch in Israel. The Israeli leadership’s struggle with ends, ways and means in the 2006 War so closely aligned with the strategy-policy mismatch in Operation PEACE FOR GALILEE as to defy description.

The United States has not been immune to problems associated with a policy strategy match. In Kosovo the U. S. defined policy objectives that threatened the very survival of the Serbian government, but designed a very narrow military campaign, based solely on airpower, to meet those objectives. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U. S. not only sought regime change, but also sought to build a democratic Iraq that would be a future ally in the region. In execution, the military instrument applied was sufficient for regime change, but insufficient to meet the broader policy goals.

PREPARING FOR (THE NEXT) WAR

Few endeavors are more difficult, or more important, for a nation-state than preparing for future warfare. History is replete with examples of countries that poorly, or insufficiently, prepared for war. Following World War II the U.S. prepared for nuclear war, at the expense of ground forces and amphibious capability. As the Korean War unfolded 5 years later, America employed unprepared ground forces, and executed an amphibious assault, but did not use nuclear weapons. The bulk of Israeli shortcomings in 2006 were caused by poor preparation for future conflict. The IDF incorrectly identified emerging trends in warfare, which affected their strategy and force planning, resulting in

¹⁹⁵ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 3.

a force that was not prepared for a broad range of eventualities. As a result, doctrine development, training, and resource allocation were poorly focused, leading to subpar battlefield performance in the July War.

Misplaced Israeli fascination with new theories of warfare clearly contributed to IDF shortcomings in 2006. The IDF's new doctrine, Systemic Operational Design, was based on a narrow vision of history, shaped almost entirely by U.S. air campaigns since 1991. As such, SOD was not broadly applicable across the spectrum of conflict.

Although the United States had dabbled with EBO and concepts similar to SOD, the concepts had never risen to the level of doctrine. Institutionalizing a new doctrine is a difficult task. In the U.S. military, it took a decade for AirLand Battle to be developed and adopted by the army and air force. The IDF's doctrine was introduced by fiat, rather than by slow socialization. Timing was inopportune for the IDF, as the new doctrine was signed a month before the 2006 War. Thus, on the eve of battle, the IDF discarded its long-standing warfighting terminology and procedures.

The IDF's involvement in the two Intifadas also negatively affected their preparation for war. The IDF constructed a military suited for the occupied territories, rather than a force suited for alternate security environments. IDF fighting skills eroded as policing missions grew in importance. Although IDF ground forces saw expanded capability to operate in the occupied territories, "after years of concentrating on the Palestinian threat and investing in high-technology warfighting concepts and means, Israel's capability to engage ... a conventional force, fighting from prepared defensive positions—a challenge for any army—was reduced."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 42.

The U.S. defense establishment is currently engaged in a similar debate over the value of conventional forces trained for high intensity conflict, versus more specialized forces trained for COIN. This debate stems from the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the perceived need “for increased specialization or bifurcation of the U.S. military to improve its ability to conduct non-traditional missions, especially post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction tasks.”¹⁹⁷ Those who frame the debate as a “choice between preparing for states with conventional capabilities or the more likely scenario of non-state actors employing asymmetric or irregular tactics,” neglect the lessons of the 2006 War at their peril.¹⁹⁸

In fact, the U.S. does “not have the luxury of building separate agencies for each block of the Three Block War world.”¹⁹⁹ A primary lesson of 2006 is that “the United States must be prepared for the full spectrum of conflict from all fronts ... preparing our forces for only selected types of conflict will be a recipe for defeat.”²⁰⁰ In one representative event during the Lebanon War “Hezbollah ATGM teams occupying a series of positions in depth received return fire from Israeli Merkava tanks after their initial launches, but stood their ground and continued to fire at least 10 additional missiles, ceasing fire and withdrawing only when IDF artillery was brought to bear.”²⁰¹ After years of using artillery units for “in lieu of” missions Iraq, artillery units in the U. S. military may not be prepared to put suppressive fire on future enemy ATGM positions. Another lesson of the 2006 War is that “the future cannot be captured with a simple

¹⁹⁷ Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 46.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 7.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 46.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 5.

²⁰¹ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare*, 36.

binary choice ... Big and Conventional versus Small or Irregular is too simplistic.”²⁰²

The U.S. must maintain broadly capable general-purpose forces. The value of general-purpose forces is that they can be employed across the spectrum of conflict. Conversely, general-purpose forces accept risk in proficiency for other, more specific, missions. As was noted by former Army Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker, “If the U.S. military actually tries to be “pentathletes,” then it is going to have to accept that in real wars against single-event specialists, it may not produce a gold-medal-equivalent performance.”²⁰³

In contrast to Israel, Hezbollah’s greatest successes in 2006 were due to their through preparation for the “next war.” This preparation included integration and application of technology, doctrinal changes, and physical preparation of the battlespace. The organization not only gained access to advanced weapons, they became skilled in their use. Andrew Exum noted, “... as countless Arab militaries have demonstrated over the years, just possessing technology and advanced weaponry is no guarantee of success. Hizbollah’s success with antitank weapons during the July War reflects many years spent training on these weapons systems as well as a good plan to use these weapons once the battle began.”²⁰⁴ Hezbollah’s success in preparing for conventional combat contrasts with the IDF’s inability to train for the same mission. Although they may have received their initial training from Iran, Hezbollah fighters demonstrated a unique proficiency. Exum points out that “the fighters of Hizballah have infinitely more combat experience and acquired tactical nous than their Iranian sponsors, leading one independent observer

²⁰² Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 40.

²⁰³ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare*, 84.

²⁰⁴ Exum, *Hizbullah at War: A Military Assessment*, p11.

to wryly note that Hizballah trains Iran, not the other way around.”²⁰⁵ Importantly, the organization learned from their previous conflicts with Israel. Hezbollah was quick to note that Israel failed to stop their rocket attacks in GRAPES OF WRATH. As a result, the terrorists discarded their guerilla doctrine, instituted changes in their command and control system, and changed their forces structure. Hezbollah’s pre-war preparation thus materially supported their conduct of the 2006 War.

SANCTUARY

The issue of sanctuary is of particular importance because of its direct applicability to ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Terrorist and insurgent forces derive a great deal of their strength from secure locations. Hezbollah and the Taliban use sanctuary to build infrastructure and train, organize and equip their forces. Sanctuary also provides increased quality of life, offering social structure and a destination for families. Hezbollah enjoys tremendous local popular support in southern Lebanon. Interestingly, popular support may represent one of the few critical vulnerabilities associated with sanctuary. Al Qaeda in Iraq lost popular support due to their actions in al Anbar Province, an area that had previously provided sanctuary. The Shia in Lebanon initially supported Israel. If that support had been cultivated, conditions may never have existed to allow for the creation of Hezbollah. Coalition forces in OEF need to take pains to ensure they don’t commit a similar mistake in Afghanistan. Finally, sanctuary provides terrorists a prepared defensive position.

Hezbollah was surprised by the scope of the Israeli response to their abduction operation on 12 July. Nasrallah “envisioned a medium-intensity confrontation: heavy

²⁰⁵ Exum, *Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment*, 7.

shelling for a week followed by negotiations.”²⁰⁶ Because Hezbollah was surprised, there was little time for strategic adaptation. Fighters were not mobilized, and terrorist leadership was not prepared for a contingency. Due to sanctuary preparation, however, Hezbollah was able to quickly recover and mount defensive operations.

²⁰⁶ Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon*, 84.

CONCLUSION

What should stand out for U.S. military planners and policymakers as they study the July War is the simple fact that an army fighting with largely U.S. equipment and American-style tactics struggled greatly – or was at the very least perceived to have struggled greatly – in its conflict with Hizballah. Thus enemies of the United States are highly likely to seek to emulate Hizballah’s preparation, tactics and performance on the battlefield.²⁰⁷

Andrew Exum

From its founding in 1948 until 1973, Israel prepared for and fought wars of national survival against its Arab neighbors. After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Israel’s security efforts shifted to its border with Lebanon, where it battled the PLO and later Hezbollah. The security environment in the Levant has been, and remains, convoluted. Arabs have fought Arabs; the Shia minority that governs the Sunni majority in Syrian has supported Lebanese Maronite Christians, and at one point Israel was supported by the Shia population in Southern Lebanon. Israel has proved unable to achieve its objectives in Lebanon militarily despite repeated invasions, and has suffered several times from strategy-policy mismatches. Hezbollah, however, has institutionalized valuable lessons-learned from each of its fights with the IDF. Coupled with the resource drain of the Intifada and the adaptations of its foes, Israel’s history of involvement in Lebanon presaged its conduct in the 2006 War.

The July War started with the abduction of two IDF soldiers by Hezbollah. Israel’s military response was immediate, but their political direction was slow and lacked focus. After enjoying initial success with the neutralization of Hezbollah’s long-range missile force, Israel settled into a desultory series of strikes against terrorist and Lebanese infrastructure. Hezbollah’s reaction to IDF strikes was to launch immediate

²⁰⁷ Exum, *Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment*, 1.

and sustained short-range Katyusha rocket attacks into Israel. When the IAF proved incapable of stopping these attacks, the IDF initiated a series of ground raids into southern Lebanon. These raids were not designed to directly attack rocket launch sites. In support of new IDF doctrine, the actions were instead intended to instill a “perception” of defeat in Hezbollah leadership. While attempting to escalate these “effects” on Hezbollah, the IDF became embroiled in urban fights in several Lebanese border towns. Hezbollah fighters stood their ground and used advanced ATGMs, fortified bunkers and fire support to maintain their positions. The Olmert Government ultimately mobilized the IDF reserves, but were dissuaded from a major ground invasion by an intense aversion to IDF casualties. Only when faced with the certainty of a UN sponsored cease fire did the government launch a large-scale attack into Lebanon. This attack proved especially costly in terms of IDF casualties, and produced few tactical or operational results. Hezbollah maintained their ability to launch large numbers of rockets into Israel throughout the campaign.

The 2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah has provided Muslim extremists with a potential roadmap for success against western forces. One can expect that terrorists across the globe will attempt to emulate Hezbollah, and replicate the TTPs that proved successful against an Israeli foe generally armed and trained to U. S. standards. It certainly has not escaped the attention of future opponents that “Hezbollah inflicted more casualties per Arab fighter in 2006 than did any of Israel’s state opponents in the 1956, 1967, 1973 or 1982 Arab-Israeli interstate wars.”²⁰⁸ For this reason, American practitioners of arms need to study the results of the 2006 War, analyze Israeli shortcomings, and ensure they are prepared for emerging terrorist TTPs.

²⁰⁸ Biddle and Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare*, xv.

There is a danger, however, in placing too much significance in the July War. Hezbollah's situation is unique in the region, and perhaps the world, in that they enjoy significant patronage and sponsorship from Iran and Syria. This state sponsorship gives Hezbollah access to financial and military resources that are unattainable for most other terrorist organizations. The fact that Israel has not succeeded in five attempts to pacify southern Lebanon also suggests that Israeli Government and IDF missteps magnify their opponent's military abilities.

The 2006 conflict in Lebanon between Israel and the terrorist group Hezbollah serves as an example of what has been described as "Hybrid War." In this model of warfare opponents not only operate across the spectrum of warfare, they do so intentionally and simultaneously. Hybrid opponents possess state-like lethality, and can "operate like an army without being bound by the traditional rules of warfare."²⁰⁹ The hybrid model offers utility in devising strategies to ensure that classic insurgent opponents like the Taliban don't migrate into the realm of Hybrid Warfare.

Finally, the 2006 War offers lessons for American policy makers and joint commanders in the ongoing fight against faith-fueled fanaticism; these lessons include the imperative of a strategy-policy match, the need properly prepare for war, and the importance of sanctuary and state sponsorship to terrorist organizations. The lessons help frame and inform contemporary debates in the U.S. defense establishment, including doctrinal issues and the value of specialized versus general-purpose forces.

²⁰⁹ Makovsky and White, *Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizbollah War*, 6.

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