

Israel News from David Dolan

June 23, 2010

GREETINGS FROM JERUSALEM!

Below is my latest Israel News Review, focusing this month on the violent clash between IDF forces and dozens of Muslim men on a Turkish-flagged ship on the Mediterranean Sea—sailing with a pre-declared and provocative intent to break through an IDF naval blockade of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Ripples from that dramatic encounter continue to reverberate around the region and the world as more convoys prepare to challenge the Israeli cordon. Some are saying the pro-Hamas flotilla sailings may signal that a new, Iranian-inspired Middle East war may be looming on the horizon, as detailed below. I have added in a bit more commentary and personal observations than usual this month, given that the clash at sea, with more possibly just ahead, could turn out to be the opening shots in a new regional conflict.

Several subscribers wrote to ask me to send out a special report on this very disturbing topic soon after the late May interception occurred. I had frankly just arrived in Israel from the USA a few hours before it took place (actually only hearing about it when I visited the Old City and noticed all the shops were shut—a Palestinian friend then told me what had taken place just a few hours before). I was preparing to host a tour of 48 folks here in the land beginning just a couple days later, and so did not have time to write anything at that point. Anyway I find that often it is best to let the dust settle a bit on major incidents like this before writing about them, when the perspective and information is usually much fuller. I hope you will all find this month's report helpful in better understanding what took place, along with the potential local and international consequences that may lie ahead.

The IDF released a very telling video last Friday taken by a passenger on board the Turkish ship. It is well worth viewing. The link to the video, posted on the popular YouTube sight, is below:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSYjuDEZw1w&feature=player_embedded

Take care and thanks for keeping us here in prayer in these very dramatic and potentially quite explosive days.

Israel at the Center of New Storm

By David Dolan

Israel seems to never go more than a year or two in recent decades without some major international crisis deeply affecting the country. The last severe birth-pang was the December 2008—January 2009 “Cast Iron” conflict in and around the Gaza Strip, which stirred up unprecedented worldwide animus against the small Jewish state, merely half the size of Lake Michigan. Widespread condemnations of Israel flowed during the conflict despite the clear fact that just three years before, Ariel Sharon had totally and painfully uprooted 8,000 Jewish residents from 21 Gaza communities, only to be met with massively enhanced Hamas rocket fire upon nearby Israeli civilian areas.

Two years before that, it was the military offensive in Lebanon that sparked off an international uproar, even if that operation was only launched in response to Hizbullah's unprovoked kidnapping and killing of several Israeli soldiers who were quietly patrolling the northern border. That action came six years after all IDF forces were evacuated from South Lebanon, as demanded by Hizbullah and the world community.

The hostile actions by Shiite Hizbullah and Sunni Hamas militiamen were clearly directly linked to Iran, if not actually ordered by Tehran—a country governed by a radical Islamic regime that is defying the world by openly enriching uranium while vowing to wipe Israel out as a nation.

Fifteen months later, Israel is back on the hot seat after IDF personnel intercepted a flotilla of six ships on the Mediterranean Sea, carrying “humanitarian activists” from some 30 nations whose leaders had previously declared their defiant intention to deliberately violate an Israeli naval blockade of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Now more convoys are either being planned or on their way, including ships from Iran and Lebanon, signaling much more trouble ahead.

It was probably no coincidence that the flotilla approached Israeli territorial waters just a few days before the United Nations Security Council was scheduled to vote on new sanctions against Iran, which were approved on June 9 by a twelve-vote majority, with two countries voting against and one abstention (by Lebanon, whose parliament is deeply divided between Shiite supporters of Iran and Sunni and Christian opponents of the rogue Shiite regime). The emerging axis that Tehran is forging with the governments of Turkey and Brazil was apparent in the sole negative votes cast by those countries.

The May 31 IDF interception at sea set off a series of chain reactions that some analysts said could end in another major Middle East war, possibly this year. Indeed, Syrian dictator Bashar Assad, closely allied with Iran, threatened just that outcome during a BBC interview in mid June. Provoking a deadly new regional conflict is precisely what Iran’s nefarious leaders and their supporters are working for, said some Israeli military analysts. A few even saw growing and ominous parallels to previous world wars, noting that Turkey backed Germany in World War One, and stayed neutral when the Nazis looked for inspiration toward “Aryan Iran” before and during World War Two.

HERE WE GO AGAIN...AND AGAIN

Israeli political and military leaders had been busy all year preparing for an expected turbulent summer ahead. They anxiously noted that Shiite Hizbullah forces continued to receive massive deliveries of missiles and rockets of ever increasing range and explosive power. Most were paid for by Iran and smuggled in across the Syrian border or by sea, in blatant violation of the UN ceasefire resolution which ended that chapter of the long and bitter Muslim jihad war to destroy the Jewish state. Included in the ever flowing river of arms were extremely menacing Syrian Scud D missile parts, as earlier reported in these monthly news summaries.

All this occurred as Syria’s long entrenched leaders, backed by populist Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan, publicly maintained that Israel was planning to aggressively attack Hizbullah positions in May—which Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu strongly denied, and obviously did not take place. Saying they would respond militarily if IDF forces struck the fanatic Shiite militia that has left other Lebanese political and religious factions in a state of constant fear, Syrian leaders threatened to launch powerful missiles at “every Israeli city and town” if war broke out in Lebanon.

Instead it was Turkey, Syria and Iran that were apparently planning hostile action in May, actively backed by thousands of seriously duped Westerners and others who seem to have thought they were only setting sail on the charming Mediterranean Sea in order to “give peace a chance.” All would have contributed much more to strengthening actual peace and stability in this volatile region if they had simply stayed home and hugged a nearby tree.

Israeli leaders knew many months ago that dozens of “aid” ships were planning to set sail for the Gaza Strip as spring turned to summer, with foreign journalists on board to record the show. The voyages were being openly planned despite ample Israeli warnings to international leaders and aid organizations that such vessels would not be allowed to pass through an IDF cordon without proper inspection. They also realized some of the ships were being chartered by Turkey, Israel’s largest

regional Muslim “ally” whose increasingly unfriendly leaders seemed to be itching for a fight with Jerusalem.

Israeli officials had earlier watched with growing concern as their critically strategic alliance with Ankara slipped further and further away under the weight of ever more antagonistic statements and actions by Turkish Muslim political leaders (such as last October’s last minute exclusion of Israel from participation in planned joint air force exercises with US and Turkish jets in the skies near and above Turkey, which the Obama administration did little to counter, at least publicly). So they understood Turkish inclusion in, and in many ways leadership of, the planned flotilla operation could only spell more serious trouble ahead.

Nevertheless, officials were shocked and surprised at the volcanic eruption of fiercely anti-Israel sentiments the IDF interception triggered on Turkish streets, and also around the world. With all Israeli tourists now being told to stay away from the nearby Muslim country, reports are growing that all diplomatic relations may soon be severed by Ankara. Bewildered Israeli leaders indicated they would not contest that uncalled for action.

WARNINGS NOT HEADED

As the international convoy of six ships drew ever closer to the Gaza Strip during the second half of May, Israeli leaders issued numerous public pleas for commanders to divert their vessels to the port of Ashdod, some 16 miles north of the Palestinian coastal zone (the bustling port is close enough to have been struck by Iranian-supplied Grad rockets fired by Hamas militiamen in early 2009). There the “humanitarian aid” would be closely inspected to verify that no concealed weapons were included before being trucked to the Gaza Strip for distribution.

As many Israeli and some foreign commentators have noted, the instructions were entirely justified and sound, given that Hamas is in an open state of war with Israel. Along with Iran and other entities like Hizbullah and Al Qaida, the militant Palestinian Muslim group frequently declares that tiny Israel—often equated with the medieval Crusader Kingdom which briefly ruled the Promised land—will sooner or later be completely annihilated (Hamas founder Sheik Yassin predicted Israel would disappear by 2022, a mere 12 years from now). Indeed, this is the central tenet of the group’s founding charter, published in 1988.

If such genocidal rhetoric was not often accompanied by actual rocket and terror attacks upon Israeli civilians and soldiers, it might not have justified IDF naval intervention to inspect the cargo of a foreign aid flotilla heading toward the Hamas-ruled zone. But alas, hundreds of Jewish graves (not to mention those of visiting American and European tourists and Thai agricultural workers, along with not a few Arab graves), silently testify otherwise.

Speaking to a group of visiting tourists from the United States, Australia and New Zealand that I gladly hosted during early June in the immediate wake of the clash at sea, I stated that if a tribe of native North Americans had taken over the small state of Delaware in a violent coup launched against a larger, much more moderate native tribe, and then used it to lob rockets upon nearby Washington D.C. and Baltimore, would the American navy allow a flotilla of “aid” ships sent by Cuba and Venezuela to deliver un-inspected cargo to its seaport? Would Australian officials not intervene if similar ships from, let’s say, Malaysia were on their way to aid a small Aboriginal group that was regularly shelling the city of Townsend from nearby Magnetic Island? In each of these thankfully far-fetched scenarios, at least the attackers could accurately say they were only “resisting colonial usurpers” who had no ancient ties to the land, unlike Arabs attacking Jews who are once again living in their ancestral biblical homeland.

WHAT WENT DOWN?

Several weeks after the dramatic clash at sea, it is now easier to detail exactly what happened in the pre dawn hours the last day of May. Initial international news accounts unequivocally stated that IDF forces had “attacked and killed” apparently innocent “humanitarian aid” activists on board one of the six flotilla vessel, the Turkish-flagged *Mavi Marmara*. The reports were mostly based on video shot by a crew on board the flotilla employed by the Qatar-based *Al Jazeera* Arabic satellite news channel, which is not exactly known for its pro-Israel leanings.

The apparently carefully edited pictures—rapidly screened across the world—failed to show the fact that rappelling IDF soldiers, brandishing paintball guns on their backs and small pistols on their thighs, were quickly ambushed by dozens of mostly Turkish Muslim men wielding heavy metal pipes (which turned out to have largely been cut from the Turkish ship’s railings, despite protests from the stunned crew on board), wooden bats, steel chains and knives. After the startled Israelis realized they were not engaging humanitarian activists singing peace songs in the dark, but dozens of seriously armed men (some later linked to various known terror groups) clearly intent on harming them during hand to hand combat, they pulled out their pistols. At least one pistol was quickly seized by the ambushers and used against the soldiers. Nine Turks were killed in the ensuing intense melee. Seven IDF soldiers were wounded, two very seriously.

It took the IDF command a full 12 hours before video of the violent encounter—recorded by Israeli cameramen aboard nearby naval ships and helicopters—was released for international viewing. The delay was heavily criticized by many Israelis who noted that we now live in a global communications community where rapid transmission of important information, especially actual video footage, counts more than ever before.

The IDF video told a very different story than the previously released Arab footage. Mostly shot with night-scope lenses designed to enhance images taken in the dark, the pictures revealed a group of obviously frightened Israeli soldiers under forceful attack by dozens of men on board the Turkish ship. Some are heard shouting in Hebrew through their communications devices that they were facing “live fire” and “heavy weapons,” to their apparent astonishment. Indeed, IDF commanders later admitted they were not anticipating such serious “resistance” which is obviously why they sent their troops onto the ship brandishing paintball guns!

In a show of courage that could endanger its future existence, Turkey’s largest daily newspaper published graphic photos of the violent encounter nearly ten days after it took place. The large front page pictures showed several bleeding IDF soldiers on board the *Mavi Marmara*, who the paper admitted had been bludgeoned by Turkish passengers that had apparently pre-planned their violent assaults.

“THROW THEM OVERBOARD!”

Israeli investigators closely questioned many passengers aboard the Turkish ship after it was towed into Ashdod port. They determined that at least 40 men connected to the Turkish Muslim “Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Aid” group, (better known as the IHH) were permitted by Turkish officials to pre-board the IHH-chartered vessel. This occurred several hours before other passengers were allowed to embark. Israeli officials say the IHH is strongly linked to the Erdogan government and also connected to the banned Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood group, which the Hamas movement sprang from in 1988. The pre-boarding was revealed by some of the interrogated IHH members. They admitted the men immediately began preparations for their planned ambush, which continued more subtly after the other passengers were allowed on board.

One of the questioned passengers handed over an important video he shot on board the ship before IDF forces rappelled onto the top deck from helicopters hovering above. It showed the IHH leader, Bulent Yildirim, speaking over a bullhorn in his native Turkish, but also in fluent Arabic, to a large band of assembled Muslim men. He encouraged them to be prepared to give their lives in the anticipated confrontation with IDF soldiers, belligerently vowing that “If they board our ship, we will throw them into the sea!” Some Israeli analysts said was not just a pledge to harm or kill boarding IDF soldiers, but also an apparent allusion to the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat’s frequently stated threat that *all* of Israel’s Jews would eventually be hurled into the same Mediterranean Sea.

Responding with loud chants of *Allahu Akbar*, the Muslim throng was next led by an Egyptian parliament member on board in another vibrant and revealing chant—loudly declaring that “Millions are marching to Gaza!!” Yildirim then encouraged the obviously revved up Muslims to be ready to give their lives as suicide martyrs if the IDF intercepted the ship—another thinly veiled allusion to the planned ambush ahead. He maintained that Israel is “very weak,” adding that the men would “gain a victory” whether or not they actually reached Gaza’s shores, an apparent reference to the international propaganda coup the ship’s passengers would secure by simply confronting the IDF as “innocent aid workers” humbly attempting to carry out a gentle humanitarian mission.

Indeed, many in Israel felt that IDF commanders badly mishandled the situation, and should have at least anticipated the strong possibility that rappelling soldiers would be met with stiff resistance from some of the Muslim men on board. Soon after the clash occurred, calls came for Defense Minister Ehud Barak to resign, although the subsequent release of the revealing videos dampened those demands. IDF commanders did say they would make greater efforts to prevent any further deaths in the expected new wave of flotillas that are being planned by pro-Hamas activists in the coming weeks and months.

Israeli officials were relieved to learn on June 20 that the Lebanese government would probably not allow a Hizbullah-backed ship to set sail the following day from Beirut port with Muslim women and Maronite Catholic nuns on board, since it would likely end up docked at an Israeli port—forbidden under the formal state of war that exists with Israel. However news reports said the organizers were hoping to get around this ban by falsely stating the ship was only headed to the nearby island of Cyprus. Officials were earlier distressed when the Egyptian government announced it would allow another convoy heading towards the area from Iran to pass through the Suez Canal. Analysts said the move was a reflection of widespread public support around the Arab world for the flotilla campaign, which was also weakening Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas in his struggles to suppress the rival Hamas movement.

Meanwhile Arab media reports said a large flotilla of American warships, including an aircraft carrier, passed through the canal on June 18 heading south toward the Red Sea, which connects with the waters off Iran. The US convoy was reportedly accompanied by one Israeli warship.

THE ACTUAL SITUATION

Feigning “outrage” as if they did not have the slightest inkling an IHH ambush was being planned, Turkish leaders were joined by many of their international Muslim counterparts in branding the IDF actions as “a massacre of the innocents,” a “huge crime against humanity,” and many similar epitaphs. Syrian dictator Bashar Assad came up with possibly the most colorful slur, stating that Israel was being led by a “pyromaniac government.” He maintained that PM Netanyahu had “destroyed any chances for peace in the near future,” adding threateningly that the IDF action at sea had increased the likelihood of war breaking out soon in the explosive region.

Fortunately a few world leaders did not join in the intense anti-Israel barrage. While calling upon Jerusalem to ease its Gaza Strip foreign aid restrictions, US President Barack Obama also expressed understanding for Israel's need to check cargo flowing into the Palestinian coastal zone. This came after he pledged an additional 400 million dollars in American aid, some of it in the form of mortgage payment relief to Gaza residents, (which must have been envied by many US citizens in dire straights with their own mortgages!). Quartet Middle East envoy Tony Blair said "Israel has the clear right to defend and protect its security." But he also urged the Netanyahu government to "ease the lives of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip," and called upon Hamas to "immediately release" kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit.

European and American officials subsequently welcomed an Israeli inner cabinet decision to lift many restrictions on foreign aid and Israeli goods reaching the estimated 1.5 million residents of the Gaza Strip. The June 17 decision caused some consternation in Israel, with even a few cabinet ministers charging that Netanyahu was caving in to severe world pressure at the expense of citizens living near the small coastal zone who have been frequently exposed to Hamas rocket fire. However others termed the move as long overdue, saying the restrictions only enhance the popularity of the radical group which violently seized control of the area from PA forces in June 2007.

Israeli officials pointed out that most aid restrictions apply to items that could contribute to the Hamas war machine, like concrete and steel to build bunkers, along with other "dual use" items that can easily be redirected from civilian hands to weapons-making factories, as has occurred in the past. They noted that even before the flow of goods into Gaza was relaxed by the government, around 100 trucks loaded with food and medical supplies passed through an IDF border checkpoint every day but Saturday, much of it paid for by Israel. Over 1,200 tons of medical supplies alone were trucked into the area over the past two months, said an IDF spokesman.

However UN relief workers said the aid was not enough to meet daily needs, although foreign film crews recorded ample food and medicines in Gaza Strip shops and pharmacies during June. All of the items brought on board the flotilla ships were subsequently trucked into the area.

Only time will tell if the international pro-Hamas flotillas are largely designed as propaganda tools aimed at weakening Israel, or are the actual harbingers of a major Iranian-inspired regional conflict ahead. One thing is certain: Israel's God is restoring His chosen people to their ancient homeland in order to save them here, not to destroy them. He has promised to cast their sins—not them—into the sea: *"He will have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).*

DAVID DOLAN is a Jerusalem-based author and journalist who has lived and worked in Israel since 1980.

- [HOLY WAR FOR THE PROMISED LAND](#) (Broadman & Holman), his latest book, is an overview of the history of the Israel and of the bitter Arab-Israeli conflict that rages there, plus some autobiographical details about the author's experiences living in the land since 1980. It especially examines the important role that militant Islam plays in the conflict.
- [ISRAEL IN CRISIS: WHAT LIES AHEAD?](#) (Baker/Revell), which examines the political and biblical prospects for a regional attack upon Israel, settlement in the disputed territories, and related topics, is also available for purchase, along with an updated edition of his popular end-time novel, [THE END OF DAYS](#) (21st Century Press).

You may order these books at a special discount price by visiting his web site at www.ddolan.com, or by phoning toll free 888-890-6938 in North America, or by e mail at: resources@yourisraelconnection.org

DOLAN'S NATIONALLY TELEVISED DVD, "FOR ZION'S SAKE" is also available for purchase. Click the title under "BOOKSTORE" for more details.

TO RECEIVE THESE FREE ISRAEL UPDATES DIRECTLY, FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS BELOW. YOU WILL ONLY RECEIVE DAVID DOLAN'S UPDATE AND ANALYSIS INFORMATION FROM THIS ADDRESS. THE LIST WILL NOT BE TRADED OR SOLD. **TO SUBSCRIBE or to unsubscribe**, go to: <http://www.ddolan.com/subscribe.asp>