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Gaza's Tunnels Re-Open, With Hamas in Charge

By Noah Shachtman January 23, 2009 | 8:21:00 AM Categories: [Sabras](#), [T Is For Terror](#), [War Update](#)



JERUSALEM - The Israeli military bombed hundreds of tunnels during the Gaza war -- to shut down Hamas' weapons-smuggling routes, and to put pressure on Egypt to the militants from getting more. But just days after the battle's end, those tunnels are **re-opening**, with Hamas in charge.

"Hamas has **seized control of all the smuggling tunnels** under the Philadelphi Corridor in southern Gaza and has been moving additional arms into the Strip since Operation Cast Lead ended on Sunday morning," the *Jerusalem Post* reports. Those passages, "are usually run by local Palestinian clans, and Hamas's decision to take control is believed to be part of the group's attempts to reestablish its regime in Gaza. Hamas can now decide what is smuggled into the Strip and give priority to weapons and explosives."

So now the question becomes: Will Egypt work to stop the smuggling, from its side of the border? Israeli diplomats are in Cairo, trying to make that case. There's talk of **doubling, or even tripling**, the Egyptian border force. But [Khaled Abu Toameh](#), a long-time observer of the region's power politics, says a real change is unlikely.

"We're back to square one," he tells Danger Room, in one of several meetings arranged by [Project Interchange](#). "For [Egyptian president Hosni] Mubarak, better for these weapons to kill Jews. If not, they could wind up in Sinai or in Cairo."

The tunnels that burrow beneath Gaza's sealed border with Egypt have been around for decades; over time, they've grown into a **huge component of both the Gazan and Sinai Bedouin economies**. Egyptian officials are thought to turn a largely-blind eye to the traffic, for all kinds of reasons. It lines border agents' pockets; keeps local militants away from the weapons; and **demonstrates Cairo's support for the Palestinian militants**, while maintaining a publicly anti-Hamas stance.

Part of the Israeli calculus behind the recent battle with Hamas was to change the Egyptians' attitude. The



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idea was to show how threatening Hamas and its smuggling routes were to the region -- and to send a subtle warning, that Gazan refugees could spill into Sinai. "It forces the Egyptians to participate," one former senior Israeli military official says.

But when asked how, exactly, the campaign in Gaza shifted Cairo's equation, that official shrugs, and confessed he's "not sure."

[Photo: B'Tselem]

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Hamas better not cry again when Israel comes back and kicks their ass again.

Posted by: **Cmdr. MArk** | Jan 23, 2009 6:07:25 AM

Cry? No chance of that. Beg for Israeli military response to keep themselves relevant yes. Its far easier to blame the "Zionists" for your misfortunes and inability to improve things for your people than to act like a real government.

Posted by: poeg | Jan 23, 2009 6:23:52 AM

Nice pic, looks like top priority is brining in more yooahoo. those Hamas characters apparently can't get enough of the delicious chocolately taste. For irony's sake, I sure hope the folks who own that company are Jewish.

Posted by: Kevin | Jan 23, 2009 6:55:09 AM

Wow what a great piece of journalism and quoting such an unbiased source. The Jerusalem Post that grail of unbiased journalism assumes for no reason that the reason Hamas took over the tunnels was to bring in weapons, for all they know it could be to bring in humanitarian supplies that the apartheid regime refuses to allow in.

Posted by: Stupid article | Jan 23, 2009 7:00:39 AM

Except that Israel was letting hundreds of truckloads enter Gaza even during the fighting. Those tunnels are for rockets, and those rockets are for killing children. The scum in Hamas even went so far as to time their rockets for 7:55 AM every day to maximize the chance of hitting Israeli kids.

Posted by: Omri | Jan 23, 2009 7:03:09 AM

Wow, interesting thing happened when I saved the image to my desktop and tried to zoom in to get a better look. It failed out, and then blurred the image out. Works fine with "Ctrl+ PrtScn & Paste"; tried it twice, don't think it's a fluke...

Posted by: Tobraider | Jan 23, 2009 8:15:39 AM

Even the Nazis could not stop smuggling in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Posted by: Tommy | Jan 23, 2009 9:16:47 AM

The tunnels are votal part of the local economy - but from reading the news reports I don't think that Hamas in charge, though they might get a reduced rate for using them. (Or maybe the owners charge more for the risk).

Trying to close them down just isn't goign to work, time to think of s new approach. ...one that doesn't involve killing people. Then maybe we can erode support for Hamas a little rather than shoring it up again.

Posted by: Wembley | Jan 23, 2009 9:39:12 AM

I'm like most americans. I don't like either side. Both sides are a bunch of prejudice, racists violent bastards whose only excuse is "they started it". Solution - pay people to move to "thier side", divide everything down the middle, build huge walls with no man's land between them. Shoot anyone that tries to cross. You'll save plenty of money and lives in the long run.

Posted by: SEP | Jan 23, 2009 9:49:05 AM

Wembley,
how do you erode support for hamas. Remember hamas is not made up of outsiders, its membership are the brothers, sons, uncles, cousins of the citizens of Gaza. Additionally how can Israel ever have peace with the members of hamas since anyone that its in that club must swear allegiance to the principles of the destruction of Israel?

Posted by: kellyp | Jan 23, 2009 10:09:35 AM

@: mogadishu_jones

So why not blame Egypt? Egypt controls how much of the border of Gaza again? Because there are webcams showing food and medicine going in via the Israeli crossing every day.

As for your ignorance of history from another topic. The Ottoman empire was broken up and the League of Nations created Jewish Palestine (west of the Jordan River) and Trans-Jordan for the palestians, or local arabs as they were known at the time since palestinians did not exist till the 60's came around. So since there are more palestinans east of the Jordan, I am pretty sure the ones in Gaza are squatters and have no identifiable legal rights to that land. Egypt did not think so from '47 to '67 I might note.

Now if you don't like that reassignment of land, we can nullify all the other League of Nation creations during that time. Let's see how many arab states would disappear ;)

Posted by: VultureTX | Jan 23, 2009 1:03:49 PM

Egypt did not used to be called Palestine, Israel was. Perhaps that is a source of antagonism to Palestinians, whose land was stolen from them by the US led UN. Israel's legal rights came from he 1947 UN Mandate. Israel should stay within the borders of that mandate, and its apologists should refrain from making deterrmnations about the legal status of human beings outside those borders, because those apologists are the descendants of Europeans who illegally immigrated to America.

Posted by: Tommy | Jan 23, 2009 2:26:13 PM

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@Tommy
Learn history then post

Posted by: G | Jan 23, 2009 2:50:55 PM

The historical crap is only relevant when we examine cases in which a weak country killed the citizens of a stronger country. It really always comes down to that.

If you kill a citizen of my country, I am totally justified in killing as many citizens of your country as it takes to make sure that it never happens again. This is not formalized in the so called "laws of war," this is human reality and is not subject to liberal redefinition.

If the Gazans wish to live in peace, and be free from Israeli aggression, perhaps the first step would be to stop shooting rockets at Israeli kindergartens. Oh, sure, they are not aiming for that specific location, just shooting dumb ordinance with a circle of error measured in miles, oh, well, shit happens? Give me a break.

You shoot rockets across the borders of a sovereign nation, you deserve whatever comes back across the border. You are the aggressor.

And, by the way, I do not live in Israel, I am not Jewish, I could care less what happens in the Middle East, but I do care about this tendency to redefine history and what lessons we learn from it. There is no such thing as political correctness in war.

Posted by: speedy | Jan 23, 2009 4:37:06 PM

Man, these Israel v Palestine flame wars eat up a lot of these comments sections on DR. Can't we just talk about the specific story?

*
ie - I'm very curious how effective Israel's anti-tunneling bombing was - are there any independant evaluations of that yet?

Posted by: Jambo | Jan 23, 2009 4:51:18 PM

Excellent news!

The tunnels should be closed the same time the \$3billion/yr US taxpayers worth of arms to Israel stop. Since they are both terrorists, they should be held to the same standard.

So glad Palestinian birth rates exceed the Israeli ones! Victory via the womb!

Posted by: Jesus Christ | Jan 23, 2009 7:00:11 PM

Why should Hamas always be the evil terrorists? What about the other side?
Jeremy Cushing

Posted by: Jeremy Cushing | Jan 23, 2009 10:03:32 PM

Back back at square one, yet once again. At what point do we say 'fu*k it' and turn our back?

Posted by: misc | Jan 23, 2009 10:43:02 PM

SEP, thats exactly what Israel wanted to do, but the poor Palis complained it was too 'apartheid' like. Yes, morons a two state solutions means to be 'apart'. Generally, Hamas will do what it can to make sure Israel looks violent- even at the expense of their own people.

Posted by: Mohammed Chavez | Jan 24, 2009 12:22:46 AM

The Problem with fighting Hamas is that their weapons are so primitive it's impossible to shut down production, or smuggling.

All you need to make Kassams are scrap metal, fertilizer and sugar.

Basically without denying Gazans food or agriculture you can't stop them.

The tunnels are also easily dug in Gazas soft soil. All you need as a shovel.

That is the impossibility of the situation. Blocking the products Hamas needs to terrorize Israel is blocking essential products needed by the Palestinian population. Civilians and Hamas all mixed together, can't hurt one without hurting the other.

Posted by: Rambler | Jan 24, 2009 7:37:41 AM

Perhaps this innovation could help, None explosive fertilizer:

http://www.strategypage.com/htmw/hterr/articles/20080925.aspx

Wouldn't help against smuggling but you could deliver it through the crossings without giving Hamas ammo.

Posted by: Rambler | Jan 24, 2009 7:45:03 AM

If Hamas really cared about it's people, it would smuggle in medical supplies.

Posted by: 'merican | Jan 24, 2009 9:31:11 AM

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There is more than mild scepticism in much of the European press that the siege busting tunnels were a principle target of the Israeli assault.

Gazans would actually starve as opposed to merely suffer from malnutrition without the supplies smuggled through the tunnels, something that even the on side US and Egyptian governments could not live with politically.

The argument that the attack was more about reminding Palestinians and reassuring Israelis about who is more powerful and who has more powerful friends seems hard to argue with given that the change in the already wildly unequal military situation is insignificant but that the living conditions of those in Gaza has notably deteriorated from an already low level.

1300 hundred plus dead and a partially flattened city is a hell of a way to rub in your advantage.

Posted by: Shay Begorrah | Jan 24, 2009 11:47:35 PM

Wired really is becoming a rag.

I don't know why I bother anymore.

The real threat to the region is and has been Israel; problem is that's not something you can say in the states.

Posted by: dirtymeister | Jan 25, 2009 3:37:36 PM

Yes, it's not something you can say in the states without being caled out as the idiot that you are, dirtymeister.

Posted by: Omri | Jan 25, 2009 3:51:29 PM

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/24/AR2009012401857.html?wprss=rss_world

Well well, I have found an article worth reading up on on smugglers beyond the Beduins. I have found ramblor to be the only one who brought something to the table. Rambler, you are right. The Palestinians are using fertilizer bought from, you guessed it, the Isralies they are rocketeering at. Ironic isn't it?

Posted by: Actions Cancelled Department | Jan 25, 2009 5:15:54 PM

It's no surprise to see the zionist's and related religious nutters trying to endlessly echo Israeli propaganda and rewrite history in real time. Israel is now by any measure a racist, terrorist state literally getting away with murder on a genocidal scale.

Omri's claims about caring, threatened little Israel letting a few trucks with supplies across the border demonstrate what a mouth-breathing, tub-thumping cretin he/she/it is. Yes folks, the IDF is posting on YouTube to keep us all informed (even the bleary eyed, drooling Omri) about the situation on the ground in Gaza. Enough already, we already understand that Israel needs to exterminate whole buildings full of civilians to "defend itself". After all, the cheeky buggers are living it up on biblical jewish lands and breeding a bit too fast to boot, aren't they?

Posted by: JollyGoyim | Jan 26, 2009 1:27:28 AM

There are also attempts to resupply Hamas from the sea:

<http://www.strategypage.com/htmw/htproc/articles/20090126.aspx>

Posted by: Rambler | Jan 27, 2009 7:42:01 AM

@JollyGoyim

-

It certainly is convenient for your propaganda not mention how the killing of civilians is central to Hamas'a war strategy.

-

international law prohibits the use of human shields to protect combatants from lawful military actions taken by those against whom it has waged an armed attack.

-

And there can be absolutely no doubt that it is the official policy of Hamas to use children, women, schools, mosques, hospitals and other civilian institutions and areas as shields to protect its combatants from legitimate Israeli military actions.

-

In addition to the video evidence showing Hamas fighters deliberately placing their rockets adjacent to UN schools, mosques and to residential areas, there are the express statements of officially-elected Hamas leaders both before and during the fighting.

-

Consider the following public statement delivered by a Hamas legislator, transmitted on Hamas television and widely circulated by video. The legislator's name is Fathi Hammad and here is what he said:

-

"The enemies of Allah do not know that the Palestinian people has developed its [methods] of death and death-seeking. For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry, at which women excel, and so do all the people living on this land.

-

The elderly excel at this, and so do the mujahideen and the children. This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, the elderly, and the mujahideen, in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine. It is as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: 'We desire death like you desire life.'"

-

There are videos available for all to watch in which Al-Aqsa TV news broadcasts a report showing a crowd of civilians gathered on the roof of a home that was a military target.

Posted by: arabs_lie | Jan 27, 2009 11:12:00 AM


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