

[Small Wars Council](#) > [Conflicts -- Current & Future](#) > [Other, By Region](#) > [Middle East](#) > IDF Fumes Over Denied Victory

[PDA](#)

View Full Version : [IDF Fumes Over Denied Victory](#)

SWJED

08-11-2006, 01:40 AM

10 August Jerusalem Post - Analysis: IDF Fumes Over Denied Victory (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525850003&pagename=JPost%2FJParticle%2FShowFull>) by Yaakov Katz.

The booms of Katyusha rockets continued; another day of what has become routine in the North. But the IDF was holding position, waiting for orders that did not come. After 30 days of fighting, the war with Hizbullah seemed to be nearing its conclusion Thursday.

Just a day earlier, the situation had looked drastically different. The security cabinet had approved the army's request to send thousands of troops up to the Litani River and beyond in an effort to destroy Hizbullah's infrastructure and to stop the Katyusha attacks. After the cabinet meeting, one division actually began moving north from Metulla. Its goal - to clear out al-Khiam and Marjayoun and to reach the Litani.

But then, under pressure from the US, Defense Minister Amir Peretz made a frantic call to Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz and ordered him to stop the division in its tracks. "We need to give the diplomatic process one last chance," Peretz told Halutz. The orders trickled down the chain of command and by the time they reached 366, it had already reached Marjayoun, a stone's throw from the Litani.

With the UN Security Council on the verge of passing a cease-fire resolution, the IDF understood on Thursday that Operation Change of Direction was ending, for better or for worse.

The IDF was disappointed. Senior officers said they had been looking forward to the fight. Reaching the Litani and eliminating Hizbullah from the villages on the way could have provided, senior officers believe, the victory that Israel has been trying to obtain since July 12. By Thursday night, the chance of that happening was drifting away...

... But the political echelon thinks differently, and from the first day of this war the politicians, senior officers said, held the IDF back from escalating its offensive and hitting Hizbullah hard. First it was the massive air campaign. Then came the limited, pinpoint ground raids. Only when all that failed did Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his cabinet approve a large-scale incursion into Lebanon and the re-creation of the security zone.

This wishy-washy decision-making process cost the IDF lives, according to one senior officer. "A military force always needs to be on the offensive, pushing forward and keeping the enemy on its toes," he said. "When you sit still for too long, you turn into a target and you begin to get hit again and again."

That is what has been happening. Over the past 30 days of fighting Hizbullah, the army has lost 83 soldiers, 35 of them this week. "That is what happens when you sit still and don't move," the officer said. "The enemy fortifies its positions and gains the upper hand."

The results of sitting in place can also be seen in the way most of the soldiers who died this week were killed. Hundreds of anti-tank missiles have been fired at troops in southern Lebanon. When a force sits still it becomes an easy target, officers said. One said he thought that the number of casualties from "just sitting and waiting for orders" could turn out to be the same as the IDF would have lost had it been allowed to make the push to the Litani...

...The IDF has been at a loss to stop the mostly old and primitive rockets. Hizbullah has been preparing for this war for the past six years and, alongside the 13,000 short-range Katyusha rockets, it has amassed thousands of anti-tank missiles..

Hizbullah has thousands of Soviet-built Sagger, Cornet and Fagot anti-tank missiles, as well as the French Milan and the US-built TOW, all supplied by Iran and Syria. These missiles are usually fired by a two- or three-man team.

There are many lessons the IDF needs to learn from the fighting about anti-tank missiles and the way to deal with the threat, a high-ranking officer said. But the most important lesson the top brass has to internalize is that it needs to bring clear plans to the political echelon and to always be on the offensive...

Tom Odom

08-11-2006, 01:22 PM

From Israeli Dissident Yitzhak Laor:

The truth behind this is that Israel must always be allowed to do as it likes even if this involves scorching its supremacy into Arab bodies. This supremacy is beyond discussion and it is simple to the point of madness. We have the right to abduct. You don't. We have the right to arrest. You don't. You are terrorists. We are virtuous. We have sovereignty. You don't. We can ruin you. You cannot ruin us, even when you retaliate, because we are tied to the most powerful nation on earth. We are angels of death.

The Lebanese will not remember everything about this war. How many atrocities can a person keep in mind, how much helplessness can he or she admit, how many massacres can people tell their children about, how many terrorised escapes from burning houses, without becoming a slave to memory? Should a child keep a leaflet written by the IDF in Arabic, in which he is

told to leave his home before it's bombed? I cannot urge my Lebanese friends to remember the crimes my state and its army have committed in Lebanon.

See: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n16/laor01_.html

Before anyone (everyone) howls for my stoning, let me say 2 things.

A. Laor is a dissident and as such he will state (overstate) his arguments to achieve his goals. I don't agree with his overstatements on the IDF; members of the IDF have on occasion stood against certain actions. As for a semi-militaristic culture inside Israel, that is--for many reasons both regional and imported--quite a reality.

B. But look at it as a glimpse inside internal Israeli angst over Lebanon and the situation as a whole.

Best
Tom

SWJED

08-18-2006, 10:48 PM

18 August Associated Press - Israeli Troops Criticize Army, Equipment (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/18/AR2006081800615.html>).

Israeli soldiers returning from the war in Lebanon say the army was slow to rescue wounded comrades and suffered from a lack of supplies so dire that they had to drink water from the canteens of dead Hezbollah guerrillas.

"We fought for nothing. We cleared houses that will be reoccupied in no time," said Ilia Marshak, a 22-year-old infantryman who spent a week in Lebanon.

Marshak said his unit was hindered by a lack of information, poor training and untested equipment. In one instance, Israeli troops occupying two houses inadvertently fired at each other because of poor communication between their commanders...

In a nation mythologized for decisive military victories over Arab foes, the stalemate after a 34-day war in Lebanon has surprised many.

The war was widely seen in Israel as a just response to a July 12 cross-border attack in which Hezbollah gunmen killed three Israeli soldiers and captured two. But the wartime solidarity crumbled after Israel agreed to pull its army from south Lebanon without crushing Hezbollah or rescuing the captured soldiers.

Military experts and commentators have criticized the army for relying too heavily on air power and delaying the start of ground action for too long. They say the army underestimated Hezbollah, and that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert set an unrealistic goal by pledging to destroy the guerrilla group.

This week, Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz appointed a former army chief to investigate the military's handling of the war...

17 August Jerusalem Post editorial - Investigating the War (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525896473&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>).

Defense Minister Amir Peretz's external investigatory committee, to be headed by former IDF chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. (res.) Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, might provide some useful information regarding the narrow question of military decision-making during the war. It will not be sufficient to determine the broader lessons of the war in the military sphere, let alone for the political echelon and our society as a whole.

The public, according to polls, wants a commission of inquiry. Such commissions, with the power to recommend legal sanctions against individual officials, were created in the wake of the Yom Kippur War, the killings at Sabra and Shatilla, and the deaths of Israeli Arabs at the hands of police during the riots in October 2000.

The record of such commissions is not a promising one. They tend to create an intense focus on only one question: who will pay with their job, or even be put on trial. Though some legal experts are proud of the strength of the law providing for such commissions, others, such as former foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, think they go too far, in that they do not even provide a right of appeal...

Culpeper

08-19-2006, 04:33 AM

Man, that is demoralizing. What happened? I wonder how Sharon would have responded from the beginning.

Bill Moore

08-19-2006, 06:48 AM

It appears that Israel made several strategic mistakes in the conduct of this campaign, but I wasn't aware of that their Army was in such disarray until recently, and it "may" explain why Israel relied so heavily on air power in this fight, resulting a propagandea or moral defeat for Israel in much of the West and probably all of the Arab world.

This appears to be another situation where capable leadership was ignored and Air Power / technical enthusiasts won the day (but lost the battle) in Israel's decision making process. There is no doubt in my mind that Israel has numerous experts in

conducting this type of fight, but they clearly were ignored.

Israel's tactics resulted in very little damage to Hezbollah's militia and actually helped Hezbollah politically. Furthermore the air attacks did very little to stop the rocket attacks on Israel. Ideally, Hezbollah should have been fought mano a mano with infantry, and probably with an amphibious assault to the north to conduct a pincher moment to block their escape routes. This would have been a bloodier fight, but it would have demonstrated Israeli political will and capability. Furthermore, since Hezbollah is state sponsored (not by Lebanon), then Iran should have at least received two black eyes and a fat lip as a warning they have going too far. What we have now is a narrative on the Arab street where Israel used their Air Force to kill hundreds of innocent Lebanese civilians (true), and that their infantry couldn't defeat the Hezbollah fighters.

Now that the initial kinetic fight is over, the real battle for victory begins. While I think the Hezbollah can be still be defeated (I don't mean totally, but significantly weakened) by the Lebanon and the West (Israel should be sitting this one out now), it will be extremely challenging. Hezbollah has many advantages:

1. The Lebanese people hate Israel for what they did to Lebanon.
2. The Hezbollah has an established chain of command and a strategy that they are implementing now (they're inside our OODA loop).
3. Hezbollah is perceived as credible on the battlefield (the Lebanese in S. Lebanon trust them).
4. Hezbollah has an established infrastructure throughout Lebanon and will operate with information superiority.

We on the other hand must rapidly introduce UN peace enforcement forces to facilitate Lebanon's Army in disarming the Hezbollah, which they can't do on their own. If the West and Israel can take the lead in the IO war (it will be hard after Israel's moral set back) and convince the people of Lebanon that the Hezbollah are the source of their problems and they are delaying the rebuilding the Southern Lebanon, then just maybe we can turn this into a victory. However, we have to form a coalition, work under a UN bureaucracy, and the ultimate key to success is an under funded, under equipped and poorly trained Lebanese Army.

If I was Israel I would put an old war horse in charge of fixing their Army, they are going to need it soon.

SWJED

08-19-2006, 08:34 AM

19 August Washington Post - War Stirs Worry in Israel Over State of Military (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/18/AR2006081801160.html>) by Doug Struck and Tal Zipper.

Sgt. Lior Rahamin's Israeli reserve unit had not trained in two years. When its members were called up for the Lebanon war, they didn't have straps for their guns, spare ammunition, flak jackets or more than one good radio. There were other shortages: Twice their operations were canceled because they had no water to take; once they went two days without food...

From the failure to get food and water to the troops, to complaints of an uncertain war plan and overconfident generals, the Lebanon war is fast being viewed within Israel as a major stumble. Military and political leaders already are trading blame; some are expected to lose their posts. Officers say the mistakes show weakness in the military, the Israel Defense Forces, known as the IDF. Many Israelis worry that the failure of the military to squash the Hezbollah militia will make their country more vulnerable to other enemies.

"For four weeks we failed to defend ourselves against daily bombardments against our cities. This is a failure that never happened before," said Yuval Steinitz, a Likud Party member and former chairman of parliament's defense committee. "This is going to send a bad message."

Such fears were fueled by a strident speech by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad at the end of the war, promising to follow Hezbollah's model to retake the Golan Heights. Less than 24 hours after the cease-fire, he boasted that Hezbollah had "defeated the legend of the army that had never been defeated."

Brig. Gen. Ido Nehushtan, a member of the Israeli army's general staff who is taking over as head of planning for the military, defended the outcome of the operation. "This was a unique war," he said in an interview Friday. "You can't judge it in a traditional way. Our war was much more like a war on terrorism than a war against an army. . . . It's not realistic to expect any white flag coming from the bunker."...

The complaints that have emerged as Israel's soldiers return from the field have heightened the country's concerns about the state of its army and the judgment of its leaders.

"If we would have gone in with more foot soldiers, we would have done more," said Avi Hubara, 40, a schoolteacher and reservist who volunteered to go to Lebanon to fight. "But the politicians were scared to make decisions. It was a failure. We got people killed. There was lots of friendly fire. We did not hurt the capability of the Hezbollah. We did not return the kidnapped soldiers. We did not win."...

Bill Moore

08-19-2006, 03:28 PM

Assuming these articles are an accurate reflection of Israel's Army, then what are the security implications for the U.S.? Although I frequently have been disappointed with Israeli strategy in dealing with their security problems, they are an ally that we are obligated to assist if they get in trouble, and if Syria or Iran feel emboldened enough after Israel's latest series of combat operations to launch a conventional attack with a supporting asymmetrical line of operation, then I could see a scenario where the U.S. military will have to come to Israel's rescue. It seems like it was only yesterday that this scenario was unforeseeable, and if it happens, how will it impact our relationship with the rest of the Middle East as we endeavor to make

progress in GWOT?

Uboat509

08-19-2006, 04:07 PM

I'm wondering if economics played a role in the IDF's problems. I have read that they recently had enact a number of austerity measures to resuscitate their economy. If money really is that tight then that might also partially explain their reluctance to start the ground fight and also explain the shortfalls in equipment, training and logistics. That is assuming, of course, that the problems are as wide spread as we have been led to believe. I am always immediately suspicious of anything that comes from the main stream media.

SFC W

Ray

08-20-2006, 06:08 PM

Somehow it is difficult to buy this line that it was because of poor kitting that the IDF did not make their mark.

In fact, poor kitting, poor equipment, no time to train etc are the favourite excuses that are trotted out whenever any army faces a problem that they can't solve or when they have failed to deliver.

In fact, if the IDF was not ready to take on the Hizbollah terrorists, then they should not have gone in. Their Generals should have had the moral courage to inform their Political Leaders that unless they are equipped correctly, then they would be able to this much and no more.

BBC informs that the reservists are not only complaining about kitting, they are complaining about rapid change of order (muddle) and incorrect tactics application.

Any links to fathom as to what really went wrong?

Something has seriously gone wrong somewhere since the IDF could thrash every time Arab armies as a whole and this time the rag tag Hizbollah has held them for 30 days. It is most surprising given that the tanks were said to be amongst the world best and the soldiers motivated since it was a fight for the very existence of Israel.

Ray

08-20-2006, 08:48 PM

30 Tanks Wiped Out in Lebanon
12:01 Aug 11, '06 / 17 Av 5766

(IsraelNN.com) IDF officials admit that the biggest surprise of the ongoing war against Hizbullah is the ease by which terrorists have destroyed IDF tanks.

At least 30 tanks have been totally destroyed or seriously damaged in bomb and anti-tank rocket attacks involving state-of-the-art Russian anti-tank rockets.

About one-half of the military personnel killed in southern Lebanon were inside tanks.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/news.php3?id=109793>

This conflict has not gone as was usual in an Arab Israeli war.

I wonder what could be the reason.

Is it because of the state of art anti tank rocket? I believe RPG 29S was used.

Is it because of poor tactics?

Or, is it because the Hizbs were ingenuous in their tactics and use of weapons?

Poor political leadership and decision making?

Poor generalship?

IDF actually being ill equipped but nonetheless launched?

SWJED

08-20-2006, 10:37 PM

... and while many are still digesting the "lessons learned – or unlearned" (and will be for some time) one reason might be the "operational pause" the IDF took south of the Litani River as the political leadership decided that international pressure to end Israel's Lebanon incursion was too great to bear.

Mechanized forces need to be "on-the-move" to be effective and are most effective in the conduct of "major combat operations." From first impressions the IDF faced more of a hybrid threat - heavy on the asymmetric with a sprinkling of

conventional and reinforced with IO - and aided and abetted by a sympathetic and often supportive mainstream news media.

This is just my initial gut-reaction - as more information becomes available I am sure many reasons will emerge.

Other first impressions include an IDF over-reliance on air and lack of appreciation for the asymmetrical fight Hezbollah brought to bear - to include Hezbollah's (and by extension Iran's) use of IO - or "soft power" as referenced on another thread.

Stu-6

08-20-2006, 11:48 PM

I doubt the RPG29 was the wonder weapon due to limited accuracy; guided missiles seem to be a more likely culprit. Even older missiles can deliver fatal shots to tanks from the tops, flank, and rear. If the IDF allowed missile crews to get behind them they would be vulnerable. As SWJED said tanks are designed for on the move fightin. . . with the enemy in front.

J.C.

08-21-2006, 02:27 AM

The point about what missile or what weaponry was used is irrelevant. Israel used conventional weapons to attack a asymmetrical problem. Like T.E. Lawrence theorized, you can not kill an idea. Hezbollah is an idea as much as it is an actual entity. If israel had used subtle political maneuvering to poison the water around Lebanon, by having Sunni opinion kill Iranian and Syrian input, then they could have looked to strangle the hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon. Instead they brought sympathy for hezbollah and the Lebanese people and killed any chance of accomplishing what they set out to do. So instead of asking what killed Israeli tanks, we should ask why they used tanks or why they used planes. Maybe well placed acts of violence could have worked just as well. As with Iraq if there is a technology out there, it will have a counter measure and a why to beat it. The fact that it happens is rather pointless, it just means you have to find something else. I guess if any thing can be learned from this action is that Israel could not control the battle space as we are having a hard time doing in our current operations.

Further, its good to still see good post and comments, didn't get much of that with the hooahs in benning.

Bill Moore

08-21-2006, 04:00 AM

Ray,

I respectfully disagree with your arguments. First, I didn't think the jest of the article was that Israel's failure was due to logistical shortfalls, but rather that the IDF has serious systematic problems, logistics being the most visible. Second, poor kitting and inadequate training "are" the reasons for many army's failures. Note the U.S. Army's experience during the initial phase of the Korean War. Obviously the tactics were far from ideal, but not so surprising from a defense force that can't get the essentials correct: kitting and training.

Bill

Uboat509

08-21-2006, 06:04 AM

I spent 18 months in the OPFOR at JRTC and my experience is that tanks tend to be very poor at fighting infantry, particularly infantry that isn't intent on staying still and providing an easy target. I have never been armor but it seems to me they get tunnel vision. A trick that I saw used effectively was to have a few OPFOR fire a few shot at the tank to get his attention and then run behind some cover. The tank would then follow and chase the dismounted OPFOR, right across the front of a T-62. Head to head an M1 is going to crush a T-62 every time but if the M1 is busy chasing infantry and not paying attention it tends to even the odds. The Israelis learned some hard lessons about infantry vs. tanks in the Yom Kippur war when they didn't have supporting infantry for their tanks initially. Back then the Egyptians were using the old Sagger which weren't terribly accurate to say the least. My mother has friend who was a tanker in the IDF back then and after one battle they counted something like 15 Sagger guide wires draped across his tank. Fast forward to this conflict with better IDF armor but also better enemy anti-armor and you can see the result. If the MSM reports from the battle are to be believed then at least some of the IDF infantry were poorly equipped, poorly trained etc. In those circumstances there might be a tendency to want to follow the heavily armored tanks rather than the other way around. At the same time an improperly trained tank crew might go into the fight buttoned up which would feel safer but which is much more dangerous because of the loss of SA. I will very interested to see the AARs from this fight. You know AQ et all will be too.

SFC W

Steve Blair

08-21-2006, 02:02 PM

Could it simply be that the Israeli army was a) overconfident because they had (some years back) smacked so many Arab armies around and b) rather out of practice when it comes to large-scale operations? They may also be seeing of the problems that can result from an army based on conscription - constant turnover leads to shortfalls in training and can also result in equipment being poorly maintained.

I also tend to agree that Israel has come to rely too much on airpower. Airpower is a good "sell," since it doesn't put many of your people at risk and does look neat when replayed on television, but it simply isn't the right answer in many situations. It is a great supporting component, but over-reliance on it can lead to problems.

Steve Blair

08-21-2006, 02:25 PM

Our own armor force learned in Vietnam (and possibly forgot it) that tanks had to operate with crewmen exposed in order to be effective against an enemy that used mainly light infantry. Tank commanders would often engage targets using their override, with the gunner assisting the loader to keep up a high rate of fire. They also mounted extra machineguns on the M-48s, as they learned that suppressive fire was very important. Makeshift gun shields were also very common.

Armor can be effective in these conflicts, but it often has to change its accustomed role. Failure to do so can be costly.

Merv Benson

08-21-2006, 04:49 PM

This report (<http://prairiepundit.blogspot.com/2006/08/israel-gets-proof-of-syria-supplying.html>) says that the Hezzies were using Russian AT-5 Spandral anti tank missiles. The serial numbers on many of these indicate they were in a shipment sold to Syria. Apparently the anti tank missiles were abundant enough to use them as anti personel weapons. Hezbollah would usually attack the IDF troops that had "taken cover" in a house. I don't know enough about the terrain in southern Lebanon, but if they could dig in a fighting hole would probably give more protection than a house.

Hezbollah also got Brit night vision equipment (<http://prairiepundit.blogspot.com/2006/08/how-hezbollah-got-its-night-vision.html>) that had been sold to the Iranians for a UN drug interdiction program. Indeed, Hezbollah may have been better equiped than the Israeli (<http://prairiepundit.blogspot.com/2006/08/israels-failure-of-leadership.html>) reserve units. A father of several reservist wrote:

...

Five of my sons and sons-in-law fought in this war. Now coming out of Lebanon and surviving some of the bloodiest fighting, they are filled with anger. Their short-term and long-term orders were confused and ever-changing. The emergency stocks for their reserve units were in horrible condition. One reservist special forces unit lacked basic communications equipment, they were provided guns that they had never trained on, and their rushed training was done in conditions unlike anything they would see in Lebanon.

...

Over the course of the war soldiers were held back for weeks when they were ready to charge. When they were finally dispatched, they were given unachievable missions in impossible time constraints. Soldiers were sent on daytime missions that should have been carried out only under the cover of darkness. Some died as a result.

...

Reports like this suggest that the cease fire actually help Israel much more than was believed at the time.

Ray

08-21-2006, 06:08 PM

Ray,

I respectfully disagree with your arguments. First, I didn't think the jest of the article was that Israel's failure was due to logistical shortfalls, but rather that the IDF has serious systematic problems, logistics being the most visible. Second, poor kitting and inadequate training "are" the reasons for many army's failures. Note the U.S. Army's experience during the initial phase of the Korean War. Obviously the tactics were far from ideal, but not so surprising from a defense force that can't get the essentials correct: kitting and training.

Bill

Bill,

I fully agree with what you have stated.

I only wanted to state that one goes to war after taking all issues into consideration, weighing it against the enemy's capabilities and tactics, and being sure of an even chance of success. If war is thrust on you, then it is a different matter. In this case, the IDF had the initiative and launched the offensive.

Thereafter, once in the fray, one must take the results of the events for what it is worth and not trot out 'excuses' (for the want of a better word).

The IDF should have realised that the IDF was not well equipped, trained or whatever, to take on this campaign. Now, to state so as a reason, does not really cut ice. There will be failures in war or in life. One must squarely face up to them and not lament or find issues as "scapegoats".

In 30 days, 30 Merkavas have been lost as per an Israeli newspaper. That is a lot if one considers the rag tag Hizbs. It is obvious that the Hizb tactics paid rich dividends. It is surprising that the Israelis did not find out about the Hizb tactics, when one is marvelled by the Israeli capability to be able to, with pinpoint accuracy, shoot down terrorist leaders on the move in a car or when strolling in gthe streets as in the Gaza strip! I wonder if any intelligence agency can equal that!

Therefore, the IDF in Lebanon is quite a disappointment, apart from being a hue surprise for me. It is like a National team

losing a football match to local club!

Hence, it is important to know what are the lessons learnt and rectify the same rather than breast beat, if I may say so.

Ray

08-21-2006, 06:30 PM

Thank you all.

One is aware of Infantry - tank equations and mechanised warfare as I was fortunate to experience the same in the conventional combat format. I could not agree more with the comments made by you all. Indeed, 'buttoning up' by tankmen is asking for trouble in such an environment. One of the safer ways is to be in the 'infantry leading' mode and tanks in support, especially in close country or in the urban scenario. I am not too sure as to what type of terrain the IDF confronted when these tanks were killed and so my comments are not to denigrate or suggest modes. They are mere conjectures.

The Hizb tactics sort of tickles my curiosity.

I am very keen to know more of the Hizb tactics since it will be used extensively elsewhere as it has become somewhat of a benchmark of success for those who wish to indulge in asymmetrical warfare.

Any links or articles available for study?

slapout9

08-22-2006, 06:58 PM

Uboat509, that is an interesting post you made about getting tanks to come at you, because that is exactly what we did in the 82ND Airborne. I was at green ramp at Pope air force base, at Bragg waiting to board the aircraft in 1973 in response to Yom Kippur. What happened in Lebanon seems to be very close to what we called Retrograde operations. Infantry with portable missiles and artillery.

You throw bullets at tanks and get them to chase you (infantry) into a big ambush. You "advance" back wards in leap frog fashion with the tanks chasing you and then you light them up. The TOW missile was just coming on line in a big way in 73 so our plan was to mix 106 mm recoilless rifles mounted on jeeps(remember jeeps?) and TOW missiles and artillery. The US plan was to have the 82ND stand between Egypt and Israel until they stopped fighting. Fortunately we did not have to go. I don't know if the actual plan has been declassified but it would be interesting to see how close the recent operation in Lebanon was to the 82ND plan or concept of a light infantry-man launched missile based-anti-armor force.

Strickland

08-22-2006, 10:41 PM

As far as the original post concerning the 30 tanks, APCs, and IFVs being destroyed; this should not be a shock to the IDF. I seem to recall that in 1987 in Jenin that they lost so many soldiers inside APCs and IFVs that all of the IDF soldiers began riding on top of them. Glad to see we are not the only ones with a propensity for relearning the same old lessons the hard way.

Neil Horn

08-23-2006, 03:54 AM

"Five of my sons and sons-in-law fought in this war. Now coming out of Lebanon and surviving some of the bloodiest fighting, they are filled with anger. Their short-term and long-term orders were confused and ever-changing. The emergency stocks for their reserve units were in horrible condition. One reservist special forces unit lacked basic communications equipment, they were provided guns that they had never trained on, and their rushed training was done in conditions unlike anything they would see in Lebanon."

I'm a newcomer and been browsing for a while, but this quote just caught me off guard... reservist or not, how can a SF unit lack basic comm and weapons proficiency. Moreover, how can they be ill prepared for the battle space? It's not as though they have to prepare for a wide spectrum of environmental conditions.?

Uboat509

08-23-2006, 04:54 AM

I keep seeing this same thing over and over. The IDF wasn't "allowed" to destroy Hizbullah but no one ever seems to have an answer as to how you destroy an insurgency by pure force of arms. The IDF wanted to move forward and take some more villages and clear out the bad guys. Then what? As we have proven in Iraq you can clear all the bad guys out of a village but if you don't A) occupy it and/or B) win the hearts and minds of the local populace then the bad guys will be back as soon as you leave. Israel clearly wants no part of another occupation of Lebanon and maybe I am a cynic but I just don't see them trying to win the hearts and minds of the local populace either, not that they could anyway. I think the military was stuck, they had to do something to stop the rockets of course but I think that destroy Hizbullah, however attractive, was an unreasonable goal. How far did they expect to go? Beirut? Damascus? Teheran?

It seems to me that the main purpose of this ground war was to stop the rockets unit! another solution could be found. Anything past that is just wasted resources taking ground that you don't intend to hold. Denied victory? The rockets have been stopped, a buffer zone has been created, the Lebanese Army has been forced to occupy southern Lebanon and the defense of Israel's border with Lebanon will be undertaken by a force which Israel will not have to pay for (not fully at least, perhaps they will have to contribute some funding, I don't know). It may not be VJ Day but it's a far cry from a loss.

SFC W

Bill Moore

08-23-2006, 02:06 PM

I concur with Uboat and would add that Clausewitz's argument that war is an extension of politics is clearly beyond the comprehension of the Israeli officers lamenting to the press about how the politicians prevented their victory. First, a military victory was not possible, the best that could be hoped for was too pressure all sides into a political agreement (you could argue that was achieved, even if it is temporary, with the UN cease fire agreement). Second, a number of other articles clearly indicated that the Israeli Army wasn't prepared for a major battle due to equipment and other logistical shortfalls, and training shortfalls. There is wisdom in Tom's reply above, and unless Israel comes up with a feasible political strategy (much easier said than done), then a military victory will remain elusive.

Tom Odom

08-23-2006, 02:07 PM

Interesting that they were trying to operate buttoned up. They did not in 87 when I was on the ground. In fact in most cases, their 113s operated with the rear door open--something that has its own set of problems.

Best
Tom

Wagram

08-24-2006, 05:00 PM

You may find interesting that a recently returned FINUL (French for UNIFIL) member has told me he has counted, himself, not through a third party, over 40 damaged/destroyed IDF MBTs/APCs when he was there. The IDF was especially sensitive about retrieving and evacuating the wrecks.

I hope to get to see his pictures soon. I'll try to keep the board posted.

SWJED

08-24-2006, 08:32 PM

24 August Associated Press - Israel's Military Chief Admits Failings (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/24/AR2006082400241.html>).

In a letter to the troops, Israel's military chief acknowledged publicly for the first time Thursday that there were shortcomings in the military's performance during the recent fighting with Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon.

Israel went into the monthlong war as a united front against Hezbollah, but since the fighting ended last week, the country has splintered into a cacophony of reproachful voices.

Criticism of the military's preparedness and tactics swelled after the battles ended without a clear-cut victory for Israel. Questions about the wisdom of 11th-hour battles and reports of food and water shortages have fueled demands for a state inquiry into the war's conduct and the resignation of Israel's wartime leaders.

In a letter to Israeli fighters, military chief Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz wrote: "Alongside the achievements, the fighting uncovered shortcomings in various areas _ logistical, operational and command. We are committed to a thorough, honest, rapid and complete investigation of all the shortcomings and successes."...

SWJED

08-25-2006, 12:29 PM

17 August from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) - Preliminary Lessons of the Israeli-Hezbollah War (http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,3449/) by Anthony Cordesman.

Instant military history is always dangerous and inaccurate. This is particularly true when one goes from an effort to describe the fighting to trying to draw lessons from uncertain and contradictory information. The following analysis is based largely on media reporting, data provided by Israeli and Arab think tanks, and a visit to Israel sponsored by Project Interchange of the American Jewish Committee. This visit made it possible to visit the front and talk with a number of senior Israeli officers and experts, but Israeli officers and experts were among the first to note that the facts were unclear and that it might take weeks or months to establish what had happened.

This analysis is, however, limited by the fact that no matching visit was made to Lebanon and to the Hezbollah. Such a visit was not practical at this time, but it does mean the lessons advanced analysis cannot be based on a close view of what Liddle Hart called the "other side of the hill."...

Uboat509

08-26-2006, 03:43 AM

The CSIS report is a good read but I am suspicious of any open source document that seems to provide so much information. But then it is in my nature to be suspicious, which is probably how I ended up in MI. There are a whole lot of unnamed sources. I would like to see some corroborating reports. In fairness I should note that I am not really all that familiar with CSIS' products having only read one other. I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has more knowledge about them.

SFC W

Bill Moore

08-26-2006, 04:45 AM

<http://www.csis.org/about/history/>

Funny, you're suspicious of open source research, because I'm suspicious of the stuff we get from MI (lol). In all seriousness I have found a number of CSIS's studies to be well researched and practical, but whether open source or classified the potential for bias obviously exists. Anyway the link above will take you to csis's history link (self promotion) which will shed some light on what they have produced. I know we supported a couple of their projects in the past (SOCOM) by providing access to soldiers to interview.

Back on the open source issue, I would encourage our MI personnel to exploit more open source material. I have never understood the intelligence community's outright bias against anything without a "SECRET" stamp on it. A reporter or researcher talks to source about let's say the Hezbollah/Israel conflict, then it results in an unclassified article or study, but if a MI person debriefs that source and writes the report it is SECRET and therefore credible, yet in many cases the PhD or reporter may actually be more a subject matter on that region. I have a lot of respect for the many good analysts I have worked with and am working with now, but this is one area we simply don't agree on.

SWJED

08-27-2006, 07:44 AM

27 August Los Angeles Times - Much Soul-Searching Ahead for Israeli Army
(<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-izmil27aug27,1,6080256.story?coll=la-headlines-world>) by Laura King.

Israel's much-vaunted military, which emerged bruised and bloodied from its 34-day conflict with the guerrillas of Hezbollah, is in the midst of an intensive reappraisal of the battlefield tactics, intelligence capability and weaponry it brought to bear in Lebanon.

Yet a war whose outcome veered closer to a loss than almost any in Israel's history is unlikely to result in fundamental changes in Israeli military doctrine, analysts and military officials say.

That is in part because Israel regards Hezbollah, a disciplined and highly motivated Islamist militia equipped with state-of-the-art weapons, as unique among its many enemies in the region, and strongly believes that its army remains capable of inflicting decisive defeat on any conventional force it might confront.

Most Israeli military strategists also firmly believe they could have won the conflict with Hezbollah had they not been hobbled by the missteps of a domestic political leadership untested by battle — a view that is likely to be aired repeatedly during what may be months of public inquiries into how the conflict was conducted.

At the same time, however, Israel is weighing the long-term implications of the militia's ability to inflict pain not only on Israel's military, but civilians. Israel's conclusions could have far-reaching effect on its dealings with the Palestinians, in particular with militant groups such as Hamas, the political ruling power in the Palestinian territories...

Hezbollah's ability to hold its own against the Israeli army, even for a limited time, has raised the specter of other enemies being emboldened to strike, perhaps together. But Syria, one of Hezbollah's chief backers, stayed on the sidelines of this conflict — fully aware, analysts said, that the Israeli military was capable of destroying not only its army, but its infrastructure and institutions of statehood.

Many Israeli analysts and commanders say the military's overall performance was far from the stinging defeat that Hezbollah claims to have inflicted. But they generally acknowledge that Israel's poor planning, carelessness and hubris played a part in high-profile failures at crucial moments, from the earliest days of fighting to the final hours...

Much has been made of Israel's overreliance on airstrikes to destroy Hezbollah's rocket-firing ability. The army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, a former air force commander, was a chief proponent of the fierce air assault that preceded Israel's last-minute, large-scale ground push into southern Lebanon.

Halutz, whose job is now in jeopardy, has acknowledged "shortcomings" in the way the offensive was carried out.

SWJED

08-27-2006, 07:52 AM

27 August London Times - Humbling of the Supertroops Shatters Israeli Army Morale
(<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-2330624,00.html>).

... Just before midnight, the order "Fire!" — given by the squadron leader — could be heard in the Tel Aviv bunker. Within moments the first Hezbollah missile and launcher were blown up. Thirty-nine tense minutes later the squadron leader's voice was heard again: "Fifty-four launchers have been destroyed. Returning to base."

Halutz smiled with relief and called Ehud Olmert, the prime minister, who was enjoying a cigar as he waited by a secure red phone at his residence in Jerusalem.

"All the long-range rockets have been destroyed," Halutz announced proudly. After a short pause, he added four words that have since haunted him: "We've won the war."

Even as Halutz was declaring victory, 12 Israeli soldiers from the Maglan reconnaissance unit were already running into an

ambush just over the border inside Lebanon near the village of Maroun a-Ras.

"We didn't know what hit us," said one of the soldiers, who asked to be named only as Gad. "In seconds we had two dead."

With several others wounded and retreating under heavy fire the Maglans, one of the finest units in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), were astonished by the firepower and perseverance of Hezbollah.

"Evidently they had never heard that an Arab soldier is supposed to run away after a short engagement with the Israelis," said Gad.

"We expected a tent and three Kalashnikovs — that was the intelligence we were given. Instead, we found a hydraulic steel door leading to a well-equipped network of tunnels."

As daylight broke the Maglans found themselves under fire from all sides by Hezbollah forces who knew every inch of the terrain and exploited their knowledge to the full...

Hezbollah also suffered heavy casualties but its fighters slipped back into their tunnels to await the next round of fighting. It was immediately obvious to everyone in Tel Aviv that this was going to be a tougher fight than Halutz had bargained for.

As the war unfolded his optimism was brought crashing down to earth — and with it the invincible reputation of the Israeli armed forces.

In five weeks, their critics charge, they displayed tactical incompetence and strategic short-sightedness. Their much-vaunted intelligence was found wanting.

Their political leadership was shown to vacillate. Their commanders proved fractious. In many cases the training of their men was poor and their equipment inadequate. Despite many individual acts of bravery, some of the men of the IDF were pushed to the point of mutiny.

Last week, in an contrite letter to his soldiers, Halutz admitted to "mistakes which will all be corrected". It is far from clear whether Halutz will remain in position to correct them...

SWJED

09-04-2006, 10:47 AM

4 September Jerusalem Post - IDF Plans Massive Intelligence Overhaul (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525995749&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>) by Yaakov Katz.

As one of the lessons of the war in Lebanon, the IDF plans to ask the Treasury for an immediate budget supplement of NIS 10 billion, most of which will be invested in rehabilitating the Intelligence Corps, a high-ranking defense official told The Jerusalem Post on Sunday.

Defense officials and politicians have accused Military Intelligence of failing to predict the outbreak of violence. In addition, it is also blamed for failing to adequately penetrate the Hizbullah command, as could be demonstrated by the failure to assassinate any of the group's top leaders or destroy its main nerve centers.

"There will be a massive investment now in Military Intelligence," the official said...

The war, he said, was a "wake-up call" for the country and showed the public and the government that the budget cuts over the years had created a military that was not ready to meet its challenges.

"They need to ask themselves what type of military they want to have," he said of the government and specifically the Treasury. "If they want the IDF to protect the country, then they need to allocate the necessary resources and funds."

The defense official said he was not concerned about being summoned to testify before an inquiry to investigate the IDF's level of preparedness and management of the war.

"For years we have warned that this would happen," he said. "Now that it has happened, it is time to fix things."

goesh

03-21-2007, 11:38 AM

- or a failure to implement it?

Taken from Israeli Haaretz Newspaper, 3/21/07:

Probe Reveals Logistics, Not Lack of Supplies, Hampered Army (<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/840302.html>)

By Amos Harel

Malfunctions in the transfer of supplies to the front was the main reason for the IDF's difficulties in the second Lebanon war, not a lack of supplies. This is the top conclusion of the in-house IDF investigation on the performance of logistics units in the war, presented yesterday by Major-General Avi Mizrahi, head of the Technology and Logistics Branch.

The investigation revealed logistics shortages, but the general staff believes the supplies would have reached the combat units if different directives had been issued to supply convoys. The convoys were hampered by the threat of Hezbollah anti-tank missiles and road-side bombs.

Mizrahi's committee - whose conclusions and recommendations were presented in a press conference yesterday morning - also looked into the employment of reserves soldiers during the war. "

Tom Odom

03-21-2007, 01:51 PM

Israel's military history despite its media and "casual glance" studies by western militaries is not as spectacular as portrayed:

a. 1948 War: when you look at the actual numbers of deployed forces, the David Versus Goliath imagery so often portrayed is significantly reduced. Not taking anything away from the fledgling IDF; in many ways a more balanced look at things would give greater credit to the IDF in defeating its foes, especially the Arab Legion.

b. 1956 Suez Crisis--the main fights in this "war" were in the Sinai between the Egyptians and the Israelis. It somehow often gets overlooked that this was an Anglo-French-Israeli venture and that British and French actions against the northern end of the canal played a significant role in diverting Egyptian military attentions. As for the Israel-Egyptian fights in the Sinai; this was essentially a war fought at the battalion level. The Egyptians bloodied the Israelis quite severely at Abu Agheila. Sharon as a battalion commander (former Unit 101 Commander) showed the same tendencies of recklessness and inability to cooperate with equals or follow orders from above. His unit was ambushed as a result at Mitla Pass, taking significant casualties.

c. 1967 War. Four phases. Air and a stunning victory for the IAF essentially guarantees IDF complete air coverage with free roaming flying artillery. Sinai is 2nd phase fought as a brigade-level war. This time Egyptians collapse; notably at Abu Aghelia. The IAF punishes the fleeing Egyptian columns severely. Third phase and parallel to 2 is seizure of Jerusalem; this is an infantry-centric fight in urban terrain against the Jordanian Arab Legion. The final phase was against Syria to seize the Golan Heights on the day that Israel had agreed to a ceasefire.

d. 1970-1973 War of the Canal. Gradual shift toward looking at the Bar Lev line as a main defensive line versus an outposted frontier leaves the IDF vulnerable.

e. 1973 October War--Syrian and Egyptian forces attack massively at once against the Golan for Syria and Sinai for Egypt. IAF loses local air superiority over the Golan and the Canal Zone. IDF counterattacks in the Sinai are disjointed and without air cover or artillery. This becomes a war of divisional maneuver against fixed hasty defenses. Sharon as a division commander at one stage fights his own war, ignoring or undercutting the Sinai front command (corps). Ultimately Sharon forces a crossing of the Canal and encircles Third Army. Nominally he threatens Cairo--but the IDF has no logistic legs to mount such a campaign and the length of the 73 War has severely hurt Israel. On the Golan, the Syrians come within a single tank platoon (the last one in the fight for 7th Armored Brigade) in breaking through.

f. 1978 Operation Litani into Lebanon; the IDF seeks to push the PLO back from its northern border setting up a security zone in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL deploys but not completely across the southern area as the IDF continues to control access into the Litani river valley as the gateway to the Bekka Valley.

g. 1982 Sharon as defense minister with PM Begin's support launches another attack to clear southern Lebanon; IDF pushes toward the Bekka Valley prompt the Syrians to enter the war. Sharon takes on the Syrians and wins. the IAF defeats the Syrian AF dramatically; the ground fight is a closer thing. Sharon on his own and according to many concealing the action from Begin sends the IDF north into Beirut. Ultimately Sharon and IDF complicity in allowing Christian Phalangist militias to attack Palestinian refugee camps, slaughtering women and children, leads to Sharon's censure.

h. 1982-2000 (roughly) Israel sets up the South Lebanese Army as a "Christian militia" in the south; the ensuing guerrilla war in many ways leads to the creation of Hizballah as a military and political force. Ultimately Israel withdraws.

I put all of this on here because the IDF fights on strategic assumptions that do not always play out and do not necessarily apply to our own military:

Assumption 1: Wars must be quick and fought outside Israel proper. That means emphasis on heavy maneuver backed with absolute air superiority.

Assumption 2: Someone will intervene so grab as much territory as possible to use at the bargaining table. This was especially prevalent in the Cold War.

Assumption 3: Logistics and personnel are designed for the short war. This played a large role in the 1973 War and again in the 1982 drive to Beirut.

Assumption 4: High threat wars like 67 and especially 73 are the greatest danger to the IDF and Israel. as such they must drive Israeli doctrine, tactics, and training.

The fallacies in some of the above are well known to us:

A. the most dangerous war is not necessarily the most likely.

B. Shock and awe may be irrelevant to final outcome.

C. You can never safely assume away logistics and personnel needs.

D. there is little room for grand maneuver and big battalions inside caves or the intricate warren of an Arab town

I would say that much of this again emerged in the latest incursion into Lebanon.

Tom

120mm

03-21-2007, 01:58 PM

To be sure, Israel would benefit from a "refocus" on infantry warfare. Thanks for the illuminating and interesting survey.

vBulletin® v3.8.1, Copyright ©2000-2009, Jelsoft Enterprises Ltd.