

GNITN - Special Edition

Israel At War – Day 173

Hamas Had Bigger Plans

More Terrorists Than They Thought

In an [analysis](#) from *The Jerusalem Post* we see that the number of Hamas terrorists is more than we've been told:

30,000 was always an estimate for how many fighters Hamas had. We now know that the number was too low. Following numbers provided by Israeli defense sources, Israel has killed around 13,000 members of Hamas.

Already back in early February, the IDF had wounded another 10,000 to such a degree that it was assessed that they would not be able to return to battle and had arrested another 2,300. The IDF has not provided updated wounded and arrest numbers since then, but simply adding together a series of public announcements regarding arrests, such as the more than 500 Hamas terrorists arrested at Shifa Hospital, at least around 3,500 would have been arrested to date. This means that at least around 26,000 Hamas members have been put out of action by Israel to date when adding together killed, wounded, and arrested totals.

These numbers are before the IDF takes on Hamas in Rafah:

Until Tuesday, Israeli defense sources had said that there were four Hamas battalions in Rafah and two left in central Gaza, leaving around 6,000 Hamas forces.

Adding 26,000 and 6,000 would have broken the 30,000 total but could be considered close enough to be generally accurate. However, on Tuesday, Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer said that Hamas has 8,000 of its forces in Rafah. Adding an additional 4,000 to 32,000 brings us up to 36,000.

However, there are still more to account for:

But that is not the end of it. Recently, IDF sources gave a briefing indicating that around 70% of Hamas forces in Khan Yunis, out of an original 4,500, had been removed from the battlefield. That would leave at least 1,300 additional forces in Khan Yunis.

Similarly, there have been reports that Hamas still had at least a few thousand forces left in northern Gaza. Adding all these numbers up, one comes closer to a pre-war Hamas force of 40,000 or more and the idea that it still has around 15,000 or more remaining forces.

The IDF Is Decimating Hamas

It should be noted that a lot of Hamas terrorists are, as they say in military terms, eliminated:

None of this takes credit away from Israel for having succeeded at taking apart 18 out of Hamas's 24 battalions and from having succeeded at removing - even with these new numbers - more than 60% of Hamas forces from the battlefield, an impressive feat.

The question remains: Why is the IDF continuing to use the 30,000 number? The article tackles this:

The truth is that even as almost all official channels from the IDF repeated the 30,000 number, a couple of high officials always let slip, in less regulated briefings, that the actual number was closer to 40,000.

For this reason, when the Jerusalem Post assessed the overall numbers, it always gave two statistics: how much of Hamas was removed and remained based on a 30,000 number and a 40,000 number.

The next question then is why the number is rising:

Have new terrorists joined Hamas during the course of the war in a way that the IDF has been unable to measure? Was the decision to go with 30,000 to inflate the military's progress? If it was due to uncertainty, why did the IDF not repeat both numbers in official channels and briefings, in line with its usually conservative estimate policy?

The answer could simply be politics:

There has been at least one example where the IDF seemed to cave to political pressure on the numbers. Up until February 1, defense officials had said Israel had killed around 10,000 Hamas forces. By February 12, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was saying the IDF had killed 12,000 Hamas forces.

Although multiple defense sources said the number was still closer to 10,000/10,500 in real-time, within days, the IDF had shifted its total to be consistent with what Netanyahu had said publicly. However, these numbers are not just part of the public relations war.

The article suggests that the IDF should make more accurate assessments:

Israel and the IDF need to make assessments about the future of the war and how long it will take to truly defeat Hamas (and what will be lost by the continuation of the war for that amount of time) based on cold-hard factual numbers and not based on wishful thinking.

There is no question that, given an unlimited amount of time, the IDF could eventually eliminate Hamas as a fighting force. But time is not unlimited. Anyone who did not know that was reminded when the US decided not to veto the recent UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire.

A Rafah Offensive In April

Barring a new hostage deal, one news source from Lebanon says the Rafah incursion is starting in April as we read in an [article](#) from *The Times Of Israel*:

Following the apparent failure of the latest round of negotiations in Qatar, Israel is not willing to make any further concessions to Hamas and is gearing up for a ground operation in Rafah, a Lebanese newspaper reported Wednesday.

The pro-Hezbollah Al-Akhbar daily, citing Egyptian sources who were said to have been in contact with Israel Defense Forces officials, reported that the expected offensive would come after Eid al-Fitr — the three-day holiday that follows Ramadan and ends around April 12 — or in early May at the latest.

The operation is thought to last longer than Israel estimates:

The ground incursion inside the last bastion of Hamas in the Gaza Strip would last from four to eight weeks, the sources said, and would be accompanied by an evacuation of the civilian population sheltering in Rafah, which amounts to about 1.5 million people, toward the center of the Strip along specific routes and at specific times, announced to civilians in each area of the city in advance.

Relocating the Gazans to central Gaza was also mentioned:

The mass evacuation would be monitored from the ground and the air to ensure that no Hamas fighters or Israeli hostages are hidden among the Gazan civilians, the Egyptian officials said.

The report mentioned some tensions over the operation between Israel and Egypt:

Cairo expressed its deep concerns over an IDF operation in the Rafah area, noting that it could lead to a further escalation not only in Gaza, but in the whole region, Al-Akhbar reported.

Israel reportedly vowed to notify the Egyptians in advance of an IDF incursion into the Philadelphi corridor, which runs west of Rafah along the border between Gaza and Egypt.

The Lebanese paper also reported that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi refused a request by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for a direct line to remain in contact.

Although not noted in the article, the area around Rafah has been a source of dispute between Israel and Egypt for some time and could be the reason for the fragile lines of cooperation so far.

Hamas Had A Phase 2 In Place

According to one journalist, Hamas was seriously planning on a much larger attack on Israel on October 7th as we discover from an [article](#) in *The Jerusalem Post*:

In an interview with KAN to promote his new book, Ilan Kfir claimed that Hamas had an operative plan to reach the heart of Tel Aviv on October 7, but was ultimately thwarted. The veteran journalist published "Gaza Division Conquered," in March, the first book published in Hebrew about the October 7 massacre.

Kfir said the picture of what could have been is easier to see now:

"Today the picture is much clearer than it was on October 7. Hamas was not satisfied with the phase one plan - but the test was if the phase one plan was successful, they would go on to phase two - and it was prepared with large forces ready on standby and prepared to set off at noon. At the heart of the plan was a breach in two areas, in the north as well as in the south and east, towards Dimona, which was singled out by the group as a very central target. The goal of the operation would have been a raid on Tel Aviv. They marked several focal points in the city that were expected to be crowded in the afternoon and evening in order to carry out a mass massacre in the city," the author stated.

Any attack on Tel Aviv would have been a one-way mission:

"Whoever from Hamas was planning to arrive in Tel Aviv and the north would have been forces with the mental willingness to commit suicide, because they knew they had no chance of returning from there. It was a plan that was formulated and in very advanced stages," Kfir said.

So why didn't this phase 2 happen? Kfir offers the possible reasons:

"Towards noon on October 7, when Sinwar and his central command realized that they had achieved success above and beyond what was expected, an order was given to the forces of phase two to set off. Here, they encountered a big surprise because unlike in the morning - when the fence was broken and there was minimal IDF presence in the area - there was already an assessment and a huge influx of forces into the Nevatim area where a large blockade was carried out. There is no doubt that if Hamas had carried out its second phase, the trauma and disaster on October 7 would have been doubled."

Sinwar hoped others would join in the fight if phase 2 occurred:

Kfir hypothesized that had "Sinwar believed that if an attack on Tel Aviv and Dimona were reported in the news, Hezbollah in the north and the other terrorist organizations in Judea and Samaria would also attack. This is a diabolical plan, and if it had succeeded, the reality would have been many times worse."

Kfir said much of what he reported in his book came from captured information:

He also said that "maps found with terrorists indicated that they intended to reach Kiryat Gat. After that, a plan was discovered by a certain force to attack Shikma Prison in Ashkelon and release terrorists. Another plan was to attack the Hatzerim air base. All this testified to Sinwar's pretensions of carrying out something that had never before been done."

Literally only God knows how much worse things could have been if Hamas had its way for these plans. Truly God's grace was working that fateful day.