

The Invasion of Gaza: Part of a Broader US-NATO-Israel Military Agenda. Towards a Scenario of Military Escalation?

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

On November 14, Hamas military commander Ahmed Jabari was murdered in a Israeli missile attack. In a bitter irony, barely a few hours before the attack, Hamas received [the draft proposal of a permanent truce](#) agreement with Israel.

“Hours before Hamas strongman Ahmed Jabari was assassinated, he received the draft of a permanent truce agreement with Israel, which included mechanisms for maintaining the cease-fire in the case of a flare-up between Israel and the factions in the Gaza Strip.”([Haaretz, November 15, 2012](#))

The targeted assassination of Ahmed Jabari was followed by an extensive bombing campaign under Operation Pillar of Cloud. The latter consists of a carefully planned military endeavor.

F-16 fighter planes, Apache helicopters and unmanned drones were deployed. Israeli naval forces deployed along the Gaza shoreline were involved in extensive shelling of civilian targets.

Israel’s defense minister Ehud Barack has confirmed a scenario of military escalation, blaming Palestine for having committed acts of aggression: .

“[t]he provocations we have suffered and the firing of rockets to the southern settlements within Israel have forced us to take this action. I want to make clear that Israeli citizens will not suffer such actions. The targets are to hit the rockets and to harm the organization of Hamas.”

The Israeli attacks were followed by the firing of dozens of rockets by Hamas against Israel.

Palestine’s response was known to Israeli war planners. The resulting Israeli civilian casualties are now being used to justify military escalation on humanitarian grounds.

What we are dealing with is a carefully planned operation, a clear act of provocation. The deaths of Israeli civilians (envisaged and foreseen by IDF military planners) are being used to muster the support of the Israeli public.

Meanwhile, the Israeli attack is casually portrayed by the Western media as part of a legitimate counter-terrorism agenda.

The Obama administration is blaming the victims of Israeli atrocities. The victims are

portrayed as “terrorists”. According to White House Press Secretary Jay Carney:

“ Hamas [is] a U.S.-designated terror group, which governs the Gaza strip, that is instigating the violence. ... Attacking Israel on a near daily basis does nothing to help Palestinians in Gaza or to move the Palestinian people any close to achieving self-determination.” ([ABC News, November 15, 2012](#))

A scenario of military escalation has already been announced. Reports confirm that Israeli is contemplating a ground war, including an invasion of Gaza:

There are also reports that Israel may be preparing for a ground operation as it moves troops near the border. A ground incursion by Israel into Gaza could signal the beginning of an all-out war. (Ibid)

The Broader Middle East War

The attack on Gaza must be understood in relation to the broader Middle East war. The Israeli attack was approved by president Obama. It has a direct bearing on US-NATO-Israeli war plans pertaining to Lebanon, Syria and Iran.

The timing is of utmost significance: one week following the US presidential elections.

Operation Pillar of Cloud is a deliberate act of provocation, intended to lead to military escalation.

The Israeli public is firmly opposed to a broader Middle East war including the conduct of Israeli surgical strikes directed against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

Is the attack on Gaza a trigger mechanism which could lead the World into a broader Middle East war?

We are not dealing with an isolated event. The invasion of Gaza is part of the broader US-NATO-Israel military agenda.

Back-flash to December 2008. Operation Cast Lead

It is also important to understand Israeli’s current plans to invade Gaza in relation to the December 2008 bombing and ground invasion of Gaza under Operation Cast Lead. (See below)

Michel Chossudovsky, November 15, 2012

[The Invasion of Gaza: “Operation Cast Lead”, Part of a Broader Israeli Military-Intelligence Agenda](#)

by Michel Chossudovsky

Global Research, January 4, 2009

The aerial bombings and the ongoing ground invasion of Gaza by Israeli ground forces must

be analysed in a historical context. Operation “Cast Lead” is a carefully planned undertaking, which is part of a broader military-intelligence agenda first formulated by the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2001:

“Sources in the defense establishment said Defense Minister Ehud Barak instructed the Israel Defense Forces to prepare for the operation over six months ago, even as Israel was beginning to negotiate a ceasefire agreement with Hamas.”(Barak Ravid, [Operation “Cast Lead”: Israeli Air Force strike followed months of planning](#), Haaretz, December 27, 2008)

It was Israel which broke the truce on the day of the US presidential elections, November 4:

“Israel used this distraction to break the ceasefire between itself and Hamas by bombing the Gaza strip. Israel claimed this violation of the ceasefire was to prevent Hamas from digging tunnels into Israeli territory.

The very next day, Israel launched a terrorizing siege of Gaza, cutting off food, fuel, medical supplies and other necessities in an attempt to “subdue” the Palestinians while at the same time engaging in armed incursions.

In response, Hamas and others in Gaza again resorted to firing crude, homemade, and mainly inaccurate rockets into Israel. During the past seven years, these rockets have been responsible for the deaths of 17 Israelis. Over the same time span, Israeli Blitzkrieg assaults have killed thousands of Palestinians, drawing worldwide protest but falling on deaf ears at the UN.” (Shamus Cooke, *The Massacre in Palestine and the Threat of a Wider War*, Global Research, December 2008)

Planned Humanitarian Disaster

On December 8, US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte was in Tel Aviv for discussions with his Israeli counterparts including the director of Mossad, Meir Dagan.

“Operation Cast Lead” was initiated two days after Christmas. It was coupled with a carefully designed international Public Relations campaign under the auspices of Israel’s Foreign Ministry.

Hamas’ military targets are not the main objective. Operation “Cast Lead” is intended, quite deliberately, to trigger civilian casualties.

What we are dealing with is a “planned humanitarian disaster” in Gaza in a densely populated urban area. (See map below)



The longer term objective of this plan, as formulated by Israeli policy makers, is the expulsion of Palestinians from Palestinian lands:

“Terrorize the civilian population, assuring maximal destruction of property and cultural resources... The daily life of the Palestinians must be rendered unbearable: They should be locked up in cities and towns, prevented from exercising normal economic life, cut off from workplaces, schools and hospitals, This will encourage emigration and weaken the resistance to future expulsions” Ur Shlonsky, quoted by Ghali Hassan, [Gaza: The World’s Largest Prison](#), Global Research, 2005)

“Operation Justified Vengeance”

A turning point has been reached. Operation “Cast Lead” is part of the broader military-intelligence operation initiated at the outset of the Ariel Sharon government in 2001. It was under Sharon’s “Operation Justified Vengeance” that F-16 fighter planes were initially used to bomb Palestinian cities.

“Operation Justified Vengeance” was presented in July 2001 to the Israeli government of Ariel Sharon by IDF chief of staff Shaul Mofaz, under the title “The Destruction of the Palestinian Authority and Disarmament of All Armed Forces”.

“A contingency plan, codenamed Operation Justified Vengeance, was drawn up last June [2001] to reoccupy all of the West Bank and possibly the Gaza Strip at

a likely cost of “hundreds” of Israeli casualties.” (Washington Times, 19 March 2002).

According to Jane’s ‘Foreign Report’ (July 12, 2001) the Israeli army under Sharon had updated its plans for an “all-out assault to smash the Palestinian authority, force out leader Yasser Arafat and kill or detain its army”.

“Bloodshed Justification”

The “Bloodshed Justification” was an essential component of the military-intelligence agenda. The killing of Palestinian civilians was justified on “humanitarian grounds.” Israeli military operations were carefully timed to coincide with the suicide attacks:

The assault would be launched, at the government’s discretion, after a big suicide bomb attack in Israel, causing widespread deaths and injuries, citing the bloodshed as justification. (Tanya Reinhart, [Evil Unleashed, Israel’s move to destroy the Palestinian Authority is a calculated plan, long in the making](#), Global Research, December 2001, emphasis added)

The Dagan Plan

“Operation Justified Vengeance” was also referred to as the “Dagan Plan”, named after General (ret.) Meir Dagan, who currently heads Mossad, Israel’s intelligence agency.

Reserve General Meir Dagan was Sharon’s national security adviser during the 2000 election campaign. The plan was apparently drawn up prior to Sharon’s election as Prime Minister in February 2001. “According to Alex Fishman writing in Yediot Aharonot, the Dagan Plan consisted in destroying the Palestinian authority and putting Yasser Arafat ‘out of the game’.” (Ellis Shulman, [“Operation Justified Vengeance”: a Secret Plan to Destroy the Palestinian Authority](#), March 2001):

“As reported in the Foreign Report [Jane] and disclosed locally by Maariv, Israel’s invasion plan — reportedly dubbed Justified Vengeance — would be launched immediately following the next high-casualty suicide bombing, would last about a month and is expected to result in the death of hundreds of Israelis and thousands of Palestinians. (Ibid, emphasis added)

The “Dagan Plan” envisaged the so-called “cantonization” of the Palestinian territories whereby the West Bank and Gaza would be totally cut off from one other, with separate “governments” in each of the territories. Under this scenario, already envisaged in 2001, Israel would:

“negotiate separately with Palestinian forces that are dominant in each territory-Palestinian forces responsible for security, intelligence, and even for the Tanzim (Fatah).” The plan thus closely resembles the idea of “cantonization” of Palestinian territories, put forth by a number of ministers.” Sylvain Cypel, [The infamous ‘Dagan Plan’ Sharon’s plan for getting rid of Arafat](#), Le Monde, December 17, 2001)



From Left to Right: Dagan, Sharon, Halevy

The Dagan Plan has established continuity in the military-intelligence agenda. In the wake of the 2000 elections, Meir Dagan was assigned a key role. “He became Sharon’s “go-between” in security issues with President’s Bush’s special envoys Zinni and Mitchell.” He was subsequently appointed Director of the Mossad by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in August 2002. In the post-Sharon period, he remained head of Mossad. He was reconfirmed in his position as Director of Israeli Intelligence by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in June 2008.

Meir Dagan, in coordination with his US counterparts, has been in charge of various military-intelligence operations. It is worth noting that Meir Dagan as a young Colonel had worked closely with defense minister Ariel Sharon in the raids on Palestinian settlements in Beirut in 1982. The 2009 ground invasion of Gaza, in many regards, bear a canny resemblance to the 1982 military operation led by Sharon and Dagan.

Continuity: From Sharon to Olmert



Olmert and Sharon

It is important to focus on a number of key events which have led up to the killings in Gaza under “Operation Cast Lead”:

1. The assassination in November 2004 of Yaser Arafat. This assassination had been on the drawing board since 1996 under “Operation Fields of Thorns”. According to an October 2000

document “prepared by the security services, at the request of then Prime Minister Ehud Barak, stated that ‘Arafat, the person, is a severe threat to the security of the state [of Israel] and the damage which will result from his disappearance is less than the damage caused by his existence’”. (Tanya Reinhart, [Evil Unleashed, Israel’s move to destroy the Palestinian Authority is a calculated plan, long in the making](#), Global Research, December 2001. Details of the document were published in Ma’ariv, July 6, 2001.).

Arafat’s assassination was ordered in 2003 by the Israeli cabinet. It was approved by the US which vetoed a United Nations Security Resolution condemning the 2003 Israeli Cabinet decision. Reacting to increased Palestinian attacks, in August 2003, Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz declared “all out war” on the militants whom he vowed “marked for death.”

“In mid September, Israel’s government passed a law to get rid of Arafat. Israel’s cabinet for political security affairs declared it “a decision to remove Arafat as an obstacle to peace.” Mofaz threatened; “we will choose the right way and the right time to kill Arafat.” Palestinian Minister Saeb Erekat told CNN he thought Arafat was the next target. CNN asked Sharon spokesman Ra’anan Gissan if the vote meant expulsion of Arafat. Gissan clarified; “It doesn’t mean that. The Cabinet has today resolved to remove this obstacle. The time, the method, the ways by which this will take place will be decided separately, and the security services will monitor the situation and make the recommendation about proper action.” (See Trish Shuh, Road Map for a Decease Plan, [www.mehrnews.com](#) November 9 2005



The assassination of Arafat was part of the 2001 Dagan Plan. In all likelihood, it was carried out by Israeli Intelligence. It was intended to destroy the Palestinian Authority, foment divisions within Fatah as well as between Fatah and Hamas. Mahmoud Abbas is a Palestinian quisling. He was installed as leader of Fatah, with the approval of Israel and the US, which finance the Palestinian Authority’s paramilitary and security forces.



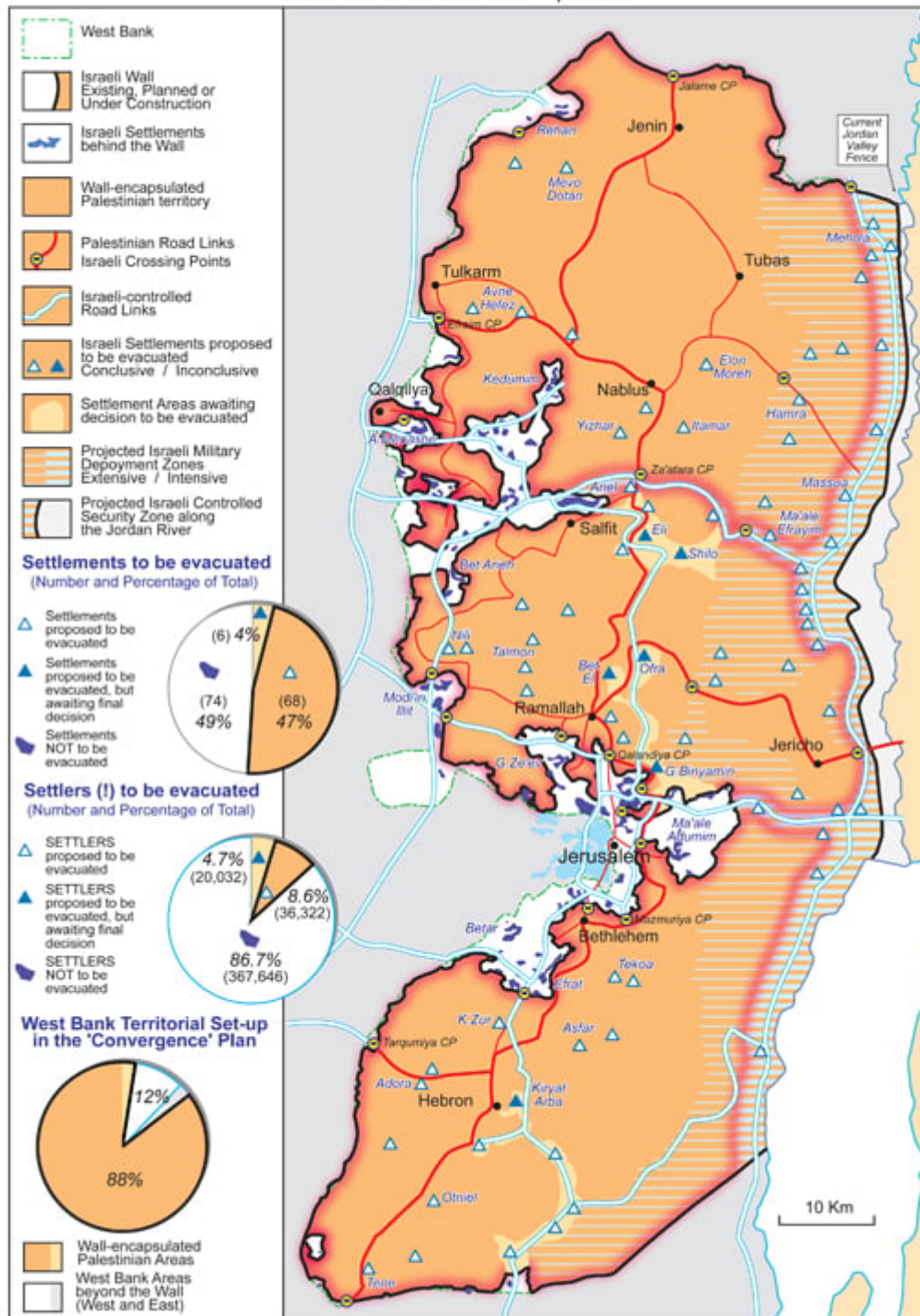
2. The removal, under the orders of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2005, of all Jewish settlements in Gaza. A Jewish population of over 7,000 was relocated.

“It is my intention [Sharon] to carry out an evacuation – sorry, a relocation – of settlements that cause us problems and of places that we will not hold onto anyway in a final settlement, like the Gaza settlements.... I am working on the assumption that in the future there will be no Jews in Gaza,” Sharon said.”
([CBC, March 2004](#))

The issue of the settlements in Gaza was presented as part of Washington’s “road map to peace”. Celebrated by the Palestinians as a “victory”, this measure was not directed against the Jewish settlers. Quite the opposite: It was part of the overall covert operation, which consisted in transforming Gaza into a concentration camp. As long as Jewish settlers were living inside Gaza, the objective of sustaining a large barricaded prison territory could not be achieved. The Implementation of “Operation Cast Lead” required “no Jews in Gaza”.

3. The building of the infamous Apartheid Wall was decided upon at the beginning of the Sharon government. (See Map below).

The Occupation's "Convergence Plan"
Settlement Evacuation Plan - April 2006



4. The next phase was the Hamas election victory in January 2006. Without Arafat, the Israeli military-intelligence architects knew that Fatah under Mahmoud Abbas would loose the elections. This was part of the scenario, which had been envisaged and analyzed well in advance.

With Hamas in charge of the Palestinian authority, using the pretext that Hamas is a terrorist organization, Israel would carry out the process of "cantonization" as formulated under the Dagan plan. Fatah under Mahmoud Abbas would remain formally in charge of the West Bank. The duly elected Hamas government would be confined to the Gaza strip.

Ground Attack

On January 3, Israeli tanks and infantry entered Gaza in an all out ground offensive:

“The ground operation was preceded by several hours of heavy artillery fire after dark, igniting targets in flames that burst into the night sky. Machine gun fire rattled as bright tracer rounds flashed through the darkness and the crash of hundreds of shells sent up streaks of fire. (AP, January 3, 2009)

Israeli sources have pointed to a lengthy drawn out military operation. It “won’t be easy and it won’t be short,” said Defense Minister Ehud Barak in a TV address.

Israel is not seeking to oblige Hamas “to cooperate”. What we are dealing with is the implementation of the “Dagan Plan” as initially formulated in 2001, which called for:

“an invasion of Palestinian-controlled territory by some 30,000 Israeli soldiers, with the clearly defined mission of destroying the infrastructure of the Palestinian leadership and collecting weaponry currently possessed by the various Palestinian forces, and expelling or killing its military leadership. (Ellis Shulman, op cit, emphasis added)

The broader question is whether Israel in consultation with Washington is intent upon triggering a wider war.

Mass expulsion could occur at some later stage of the ground invasion, were the Israelis to open up Gaza’s borders to allow for an exodus of population. Expulsion was referred to by Ariel Sharon as the “a 1948 style solution”. For Sharon “it is only necessary to find another state for the Palestinians. -‘Jordan is Palestine’ - was the phrase that Sharon coined.” (Tanya Reinhart, op cit)

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