

Why Israel Slept

By James Bamford – ICH, Nov, 2023

The long catalogue of intelligence failures that allowed Hamas to stage its brutal surprise attack on October 7 begins at The Venetian, Sheldon Adelson's Las Vegas resort.

A future film about Israel's massive October 7 intelligence failure might be titled *All Quiet on the Gaza Front*.

For months if not years, members of Hamas had covertly plotted their breakout from Gaza, long referred to as Israel's open-air prison for Palestinians. As designed by Orwell and Kafka, Gaza subjects its 2.3 million inhabitants to endless surveillance of their voices, faces, and movements; they are trapped in a labyrinthine maze of fences, checkpoints, and humiliation. **Pretending to accept their wretched conditions as model prisoners, they lulled their Israeli overlords to focus their attention elsewhere.**

"For more than a decade," noted *The Washington Post* in 2021, when analysts described the strategy utilized by Israel against Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, they've used a metaphor: With their displays of overwhelming military strength, Israeli forces were "mowing the grass."

The phrase implies the Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip and their supply of crude but effective homemade weapons are like weeds that need to be cut back.

Such tactics have faced significant criticism from international human rights groups, often due to the disproportionate number of deaths caused by Israeli forces, compared to those caused by Palestinian militants during conflict.

By 2015, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was content that his military's deadly rockets, assassination drones, and snipers were keeping the grass neatly mowed in Gaza. He therefore decided to turn his attention toward launching a new front in his war against the Palestinians. This one, however, would be covert. Its target: the growing numbers of noisy and irritating Americans who dared to protest his government's brutal occupation.

The shift began behind closed doors in The Venetian Resort, a neon nirvana on the Las Vegas strip.

In a back conference room not far from the imitation Italian gondolas and the faux St. Mark's Square, attendees of the June 2015 conclave were instructed to avoid leaks. **"All proceedings," they were told, "shall remain strictly confidential."** The invitation warned that that they must agree **"not to discuss the events of the conference with media before, during and after" the meeting. What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.**

Once the doors were closed, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the gathering in a letter read by the host—and owner of the Venetian—multibillionaire Sheldon Adelson. “Greetings from Jerusalem,” [Netanyahu said](#):

“Delegitimization of Israel must be fought, and you are on the front lines,” he informed them, adding that “the Israeli government is committed to launching assertive and innovative programs and to joining you and many others around the world to combat the lies and slander that are leveled against us.” Ironically, despite the insistence on secrecy, details of the meeting quickly leaked to the newspaper *The Forward* and Netanyahu’s remarks were later released by the Israeli government.

Key targets of Netanyahu’s second front in the United States were the Americans taking part in the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a dedicated and growing assortment of college students and human rights supporters scattered across the country armed with Twitter followings as bullhorns. Their goal: to rally the world to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel until it ends its brutal, racist, and illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. The organization modeled itself after the successful worldwide nonviolent campaign against South African apartheid.

Among the movement’s supporters was the late South African archbishop Desmond Tutu, who along with Nelson Mandela had long battled the white apartheid government in Pretoria. During an emotional address and press conference in Boston in 2007, Tutu called Israel [“worse”](#) than South African apartheid in some respects, including the illegal use of “collective punishment” of Palestinians. He also criticized the government for its brutality and its “gross violation of human rights.” Mandela was likewise outraged by Israeli apartheid—as well as the country’s key role in supporting South African apartheid and undermining the global boycott against it. ***“We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians,” he said during an address in Pretoria at the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1997.***

Netanyahu’s greatest fear was that as a result of the growing strength of the BDS movement, the American public would finally begin seeing Israel in the same light that many people in the rest of the world, and even in Israel, saw it: as a brutal apartheid state. The more Israel’s atrocities came to light, the more the BDS movement gained strength around the country. On the same weekend that Adelson’s secret task force was forming in Las Vegas, an Associated Press news article [noted](#),

“In boardrooms and campuses, on social media and in celebrity circles, momentum seems to be growing for a global pressure campaign on Israel. The atmosphere recalls the boycotts that helped demolish apartheid South Africa a quarter century ago.... Increasingly prominent is the so-called ‘BDS’ (boycott-disinvestment-sanctions) movement, run by Palestinians and leftist activists from around the world.”

Hence Netanyahu's move to counter the protesters with lots of money to buy political power in Washington to create laws making it a crime to boycott Israel. The group at the Venetian would make up what would become Adelson's Army, a task force of Gulfstream warriors (since so many of them owned private jets). The objective was the launch of a political and psychological war targeting Americans on behalf of Israel.