

The most successful military raid of this century: the October 7 Hamas assault on Israel

By Scott Ritter – October, 2025

I published this article back on November 20, 2023, approximately six weeks after the Hamas raid on Israel. On this, the second anniversary of the Hamas raid, this article has stood the test of time.

There is a truism that I often cite when discussing the various analytical approaches to assessing the wide variety of geopolitical problems facing the world today—you can't solve a problem unless you first properly define it. The gist of the argument is quite simple—any solution which has nothing to do with the problem involved is, literally, no solution at all.

Israel has characterized the attack carried out by Hamas on the various Israeli military bases and militarized settlements, or Kibbutz, which in their totality comprised an important part of the Gaza barrier system, as a massive act of terrorism, likening it to the September 11, 2001 terror attacks against the United States. Israel supports this characterization by citing the number of persons killed (some 1,200, a downward revision issued by Israel after realizing that 200 of the dead were Palestinian fighters) and detailing a wide variety of atrocities it claims were perpetrated by Hamas, including mass rape, the beheading of children, and the wonton murder of unarmed Israeli civilians.

The problem with the Israeli claims is that they are demonstrably false or misleading.

Nearly a third of the Israeli casualties consisted of military, security, and police officers. Moreover, it turns out that the number one killer of Israelis on October 7 wasn't Hamas or other Palestinian factions, but the Israeli military itself. Recently released video shows Israeli Apache helicopters indiscriminately firing on Israeli civilians trying to flee the Supernova Sukkot Gathering held in the open desert near Kibbutz Re'im, the pilots unable to distinguish between the civilians and the Hamas fighters. **Many of the vehicles that the Israeli government has shown as an example of Hamas perfidy were destroyed by the Israeli Apache helicopters.**

Likewise, the Israeli government has widely publicized what it is calling the "Re'im massacre," citing a death toll of some 112 civilians it claims were murdered by Hamas. However, eyewitness accounts from both surviving Israeli civilians and military personnel involved in the fighting show that the vast majority of those killed died from fire from Israeli soldiers and tanks directed at buildings where the civilians were either hiding or being held hostage by Hamas fighters. It took two days for the Israeli military to recapture Re'im. It only did so after tanks fired into the civilian residences, collapsing them onto their occupants, and often setting them ablaze, causing the bodies of those inside to

be consumed by fire. The Israeli government has publicized how it has had to make use of the services of forensic archeologists to identify human remains at the Kibbutz, implying that Hamas had burned the occupants' home. **But the fact is it was Israeli tanks that did the destruction and killing.**

This scene was repeated in other Kibbutzes along the Gaza barrier system.

The Israeli government treats the Kibbutz as being purely civilian, and yet has published how armed security teams of several Kibbutzim—drawn from the so-called “civilian” residents—were able to mobilize in time to successfully repel the Hamas attackers. **The reality is that every Kibbutz had to be treated by Hamas as an armed encampment, and as such assaulted as if it were a military objective, for the simple fact that they were—all of them.**

Moreover, until Israel relocated several battalions of IDF forces to the West Bank, each Kibbutz had been reinforced by a squad of around 20 IDF soldiers who were billeted in the Kibbutz. Given that Hamas had planned this attack for well over a year, Hamas had to assume that these 20 IDF soldiers were still located in each Kibbutz, and act accordingly.

The Israeli government has had to walk back its claims that Hamas beheaded 40 children and has provided no credible evidence that Hamas was involved in the rape or sexual assault of a single Israeli female. Eyewitness accounts describe the Hamas fighters as disciplined, determined, and deadly in the attack, and yet courteous and gentle when dealing with civilian captives.

The question arises as to why the Israeli government would go out of its way to manufacture a narrative designed to support the false and misleading characterization of the October 7 attack by Hamas on the Gaza barrier system as an act of terrorism.

The answer is as disturbing as it is clear—because what happened on October 7 was not a terrorist attack, but a military raid. The difference between the two terms is night and day—by labeling the events of October 7 as acts of terrorism, Israel transfers blame for the huge losses away from its military, security, and intelligence services, and onto Hamas. If Israel were, however, to acknowledge that what Hamas did was in fact a raid—a military operation—then the competency of the Israeli military, security, and intelligence services would be called into question, as would the political leadership responsible for overseeing and directing their operations.

And if you're Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, this is the last thing you want.

Benjamin Netanyahu is fighting for his political life. He was already facing a crisis of his own making, having pushed for legislation which re-wrote Israeli Basic Law in a way which placed the Israeli judiciary under the control of the Knesset, effectively terminating its status as a separate but equal branch of

government (so much for Israel being the “greatest democracy in the Middle East”). This act brought Israel on the verge of a civil war, with hundreds of thousands of protesters taking to the streets to denounce Netanyahu. **What makes Netanyahu’s actions even more despicable is that it represented little more than a naked power play designed to prevent the Israeli court system from trying him on several credible allegations of corruption which, if Netanyahu were found guilty (a distinct probability), would have put him in jail for many years.**

Netanyahu had billed himself as Israel’s top defender, a specialist on the threats facing Israel abroad, and how to best respond to them. He has openly advocated a military confrontation with Iran over its nuclear program. Netanyahu is also a proponent of political Zionism in its most extreme application and has promoted the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which use tactics that forcibly displace Palestinians from their homes and villages, as part of an overall plan to create a “greater Israel” that mirrors that of Biblical times.

Part of Netanyahu’s strategy to accomplish this dream of a “greater Israel” is to weaken the Palestinian people and their government to the point of irrelevancy, thereby preventing them from achieving their dream of obtaining an independent Palestinian state. To facilitate this strategy, Netanyahu has, over the course of the past two decades, promoted the growth of Hamas as a political organization. The purpose of this support is simple—by promoting Hamas, Netanyahu weakens the Palestinian Authority, the governing body of Palestinian people, headed by its President, Mahmoud Abbas.

Netanyahu’s plan was working—in September 2020 Netanyahu signed the Abraham Accords, a series of bilateral agreements brokered by the administration of then-President Donald Trump that sought the normalization of relations between Israel and several Gulf Arab States, all at the expense of an independent Palestinian nation. **Prior to the Hamas attack on October 7, Israel was on the cusp of normalizing relations with Saudi Arabia, an act which would have proven to be the final nail in the coffin of Palestinian statehood.**

One of the main reasons for Israel’s progress in this regard was its success in creating a political divide between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

On October 7, however, this success was washed away by the victory that Hamas achieved over the IDF. The precise means by which this victory took place is the subject for another time. But the basic elements of this victory are well-established.

Hamas effectively neutralized Israel’s vaunted intelligence services, blinding them to the possibility of an attack of this scope and scale.

When the attack occurred, Hamas was able to strike with precision the very surveillance and communication nodes the IDF relied upon to mobilize a response in case of an attack.

Hamas defeated those Israeli soldiers stationed along the barrier wall in a stand-up fight. Two battalions of the Golani Brigade were routed, as were elements of other vaunted IDF units.

Hamas struck the Headquarters of the Gaza Division, the local intelligence hub, and other major command and control facilities with brutal precision, turning what should have been a five-minute response time into many hours—more than enough time for Hamas to carry out one of its primary objectives—the taking of hostages. This they did with extreme proficiency, returning to Gaza with more than 230 Israeli soldiers and civilians.

The Marine Corps defines a raid as “an operation, usually small scale, involving a swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, confuse the enemy, or to destroy his installations. It ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission.”

This is precisely what Hamas did on October 7.

What were the objectives of this raid? According to Hamas, the purpose behind the October 7 raid were threefold.

First, to reassert the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland not defined by the Abraham Accords.

Second, to release the more than 10,000 Palestinians held prisoner by Israel, most without having been charged with a crime, and none with any notion of due process.

Third, to return the sanctity of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Islam’s third holiest place, which had been desecrated repeatedly by Israeli security forces over the past years.

To accomplish these goals, the October 7 raid needed to create the necessary conditions for victory. This was achieved by humiliating Israel sufficiently to provoke a predictable outcome—the implementation of the Dahiya Doctrine of collective punishment against the civilian population of Gaza, combined with a ground attack on Gaza that would lure the IDF into what was in effect a Hamas ambush.

The taking of hostages was meant to provide Hamas with negotiating leverage for the release of the 10,000 prisoners held by Israel.

The Israeli bombardment and invasion of Gaza has resulted in international revulsion against Israel as the world recoils from the humanitarian disaster that is unfolding before their very eyes. The streets of major cities around the world are full of angry protestors demonstrating on behalf of the Palestinian people—and Palestinian statehood. **The United States is now stating that a two-state solution—something the Abrahams Accord was designed to prevent—is now the only way forward for peace in the Middle East.**

The United States would never have said this on October 6.

The fact that the United States has taken this stance is because of the Hamas raid of October 7.

Israel is in negotiations with the United States and others about a possible prisoner exchange involving the Hamas hostages and certain categories of political prisoners—women and children—held by Israel (yes, you read that right—children. And now you know the wisdom of Hamas' decision to take Israeli children hostage.)

Such a possibility would never have occurred if it weren't for the Hamas raid of October 7.

And in Saudi Arabia, the largest gathering of Islamic nations in modern history has convened to discuss the Gaza crisis. One of the top agenda items is the issue of the Al Aqsa Mosque and ending Israeli desecration.

This was a discussion that would never have taken place if it were not for the Hamas raid of October 7.

It goes without saying that the Hamas raid of October 7 unleashed a firestorm of brutal recrimination in the form of bombs, shells, and bullets on the civilian population of Gaza. These are people who, for nearly eight decades, have been denied a homeland of their own by the Israelis, who violently evicted the Palestinians from the land currently called Israel in one of the greatest acts of ethnic cleansing in modern history—the Nakba, or catastrophe, of 1948.

These are people who have suffered untold deprivation at the hand of their Israeli occupiers while awaiting the moment they will see their dream of a Palestinian homeland come true. **They know that a Palestinian homeland cannot be realized so long as Israel is governed by those who embrace the notion of a Greater (Eretz) Israel, and that the only way to remove such people is by defeating them politically, and the only way to trigger their political defeat is to defeat them militarily.**

Hamas is accomplishing this.

But there is a price to pay—a heavy price. The French lost 20,000 civilians killed to achieve the liberation of Normandy in the Summer of 1944.

So far, the Palestinian civilians of Gaza have lost 12,000 civilians killed in the effort led by Hamas to militarily defeat their Israeli occupiers.

That price will go higher in the days and weeks to come.

But it is a price that must be paid if there is to be any chance of a Palestinian homeland.

The sacrifice of the Palestinian people has compelled an Arab and Islamic world which, with few exceptions, has been mute over the depravations carried out by Israel against the Palestinian people. Who did nothing as the cause of Palestinian statehood was mooted by the Abraham Accords.

Only because of the suffering of the Palestinian people is anyone paying attention to the cause of Palestinian statehood today.

Or the welfare of the Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Or the sanctity of the Al Aqsa Mosque.

These were all stated objectives of Hamas in launching their attack of October 7.

And all objectives are being accomplished as we speak.

Only because of the actions of Hamas and the sacrifices of the Palestinian people.

Which makes the October 7 assault on Israel by Hamas the most successful military raid of this century.