Iran’s pincer war on Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 07.07.2023

Operation “Bayit VeGan” was more than a two-day anti-terrorist raid meant to capture enemy operatives and weapons in the Palestinian city of Jenin. It was another stage in Israel’s ongoing and escalating war with Iran.

The mullahs of Teheran largely are behind the sophisticated and well-equipped military infrastructure exposed and destroyed by the IDF this week. Iran is funding the efforts of two radical Islamic militias, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to penetrate Judea and Samaria, expanding their bases of attack against Israel from Gaza to the West Bank.

As far back as 2014, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei began to openly advocate for “exporting the Islamic revolution” to hills of Samaria. He called for “serious planning to add the West Bank to the confrontation with Israel.” “Gaza is the center of resistance, but resistance groups in the West Bank are the key that can bring the Zionist enemy to its knees,” Khamenei said.

The notorious commander of the Iranian revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani (assassinated by the US in 2020), took-up the charge, making the arming of West Bank militias an Iranian priority.

Soleimani brought Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and his deputy Saleh al-Arouri to meet Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi in Teheran. Hamas official Osama Hamdan then bragged about a “new stage of resistance” in which Iran would back the creation of “20 to 30 new battalions of 2,000 militants in Samaria.”

Last month, Khamenei hosted Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leaders in Teheran. Islamic Jihad’s Secretary-General Ziyad al-Nakhaleh, who participated in the terrorist summit, plainly told Iranian newspaper *Al-Wefaq* that anti-Israeli operations actions in the West Bank reflect directives coming from Iran.

“The arming of the West Bank, a directive issued by Iran’s Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, significantly impacts the region,” he said. “Efforts were made to implement this directive, including weapon smuggling and purchasing from Israelis. The aim was to bring about a qualitative shift in the Palestinian situation and enhance resistance actions in the West Bank.”

Al-Nakhaleh continued: “In terms of practical support, it is important to clarify that the aid provided by the Islamic Republic to the Palestinian people is significant. The assistance includes security and military help, training, economic support, and humanitarian aid for the families of martyrs and prisoners… No other country in the world takes such a stance so explicitly, a testament to Tehran’s support for the Palestinian resistance factions, with strong ties between PIJ, Hamas and the Islamic Republic.”

Al-Nakhaleh also saluted the significant economic assistance provided by Iran, “in addition to contributing to creating a resistance infrastructure in Palestine.”

And where is all the money coming from? Well, Iran is getting tens of billions of dollars in sanctions relief from President Biden’s administration. On behalf of Iran, Hezbollah and the Qods Force are invested heavily in drug production and distribution (Captagon pills and more) across the Middle East and Europe, and in money-laundering cryptocurrency schemes – as revealed two weeks ago by the Israeli defense and foreign affairs ministries.

IT IS PRECISELY the “resistance infrastructure” bragged about by Al-Nakhaleh that the IDF targeted this week. This was an Israeli effort to kill the terrorist cancer in early stages to prevent the “Lebanonization” of Jenin; before Palestinian terrorist cells in Samaria metastasize into a menace that surgical strikes can’t overcome.

Israel cannot sit by and watch the West Bank (in Israel’s center, adjacent to Israel’s three key cities, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa) become another full-fledged base of Iranian military operations against Israel, like Gaza (on Israel’s southern border) and Lebanon (on Israel’s northern border).

Israeli analyst Dan Diker (president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs) points out that Iran now outflanks Israel on three sides. He calls this an “Iranian pincer movement” against Israel. From Gaza, Hamas and PIJ have targeted Israel with tens of thousands of rockets. From Lebanon and Syria, IRGC Quds forces and Hezbollah’s proxy terror army have about 180,000 rockets and laser-guided missiles directed at Israeli cities. From both directions, these Iranian-backed forces have dug and sought to use terror attack tunnels into Israel.

Khamenei now uses the phrase “the unity of fronts” against Israel, meant to include Gaza, Lebanon, Jerusalem, the West Bank – and next, Jordan.

Destabilization of the generally pro-Western (and purportedly Israel-ally) Hashemite Kingdom long has been an Iranian goal. From Jordan, which straddles Israel's longest border, Iranian proxies could penetrate and further destabilize the West Bank.

And it may not be all that hard to do. Jordan is a perpetual economic basket-case, a rickety country with a disgruntled populace that also hosts millions of refugees including Syrians and Palestinians who still dream of destroying Israel.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Michael Knight notes that Iraq can be considered a model for what Iran wants to do to Jordan. Iraq is quietly falling apart, he says, with Iranian-controlled Popular Mobilization Units fully incorporated into the Iraqi army, and most Iraqi politicians too fearful to resist. Iraq has become an Iranian hegemonic success story, and Khamenei intends Jordan to be next.

In Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, Iraq (and Yemen), Western powers have been feckless and proved powerless in impeding Iranian advances. Remember UN Resolution 1701 ending the 2006 Second Lebanon War which mandated the disarmament of Hezbollah and the prevention of any armed forces south of the Litani River, except for the Lebanese army and UNIFIL? What a joke that resolution and that UN force has proven to be!

Remember the Palestinian Authority, established under the internationally backed and massively funded Oslo Accords, which was supposed to bring peace to Palestinians and Israelis alike; or at least good governance and basic security in the West Bank and Gaza? What a disappointment that corrupt, weak, and hostile "Authority" has become!

The only real power standing in the way of Palestinian terrorism and Iranian hegemonism is Israel.

Alas, no understanding of this reality could be found in media reporting on, or the reactions in most Western capitals to, the IDF operation in Jenin this week.

Instead, reporters and diplomats fluttered with namby-pamby statements about the need of "all sides" to reduce tensions, and then they plainted about terrible loss of life or the difficult (indeed!) humanitarian situation in Jenin – as if all this were occurring in a complete vacuum.

The average Westerner could have gotten the impression (from supposedly seasoned reporters and evidently expert diplomats) that Zionist stormtroopers landed from Mars and for no good reason raided the pastoral farmlands of Palestine. As if the IDF did not confiscate in Jenin thousands of illegal weapons and discover dozens of underground military command posts with sophisticated technology that were directing murderous attacks on Israelis and making a mockery of vestigial Palestinian Authority control of a major Palestinian city.

As if Iranian-backed Palestinian terrorism was not the core problem, and Israel had no business defending its citizenry accordingly.

No wonder that Israelis have grown quite unreceptive to criticism of their defense policies by friends and foes alike.

Published in Israel Hayom, September 7, 2023.