

Chapter 6

Intelligence in the War: Observations and Insights

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In July 2006, after three failed kidnapping attempts, Hizbollah succeeded in kidnapping two Israeli soldiers and killing eight others. This successful operation by the Lebanese organization came on the heels of the kidnapping of the soldier Gilad Shalit by the Palestinians near the Gaza Strip border. These provocations, together with the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, lent the necessary legitimacy to the IDF's response, which developed into the Second Lebanon War.

The following essay probes the role of Military Intelligence, one of the elements that had a substantive influence on the war, beginning with the situation assessment as it was presented to the cabinet, including the prime minister, prior to the kidnapping in July 2006.

The Hizbollah Profile

Military Intelligence's organizational profile of Hizbollah, which was borne out in the 2006 war, was composed over several years. It reflects several formative influences, including the events of May 2000, when the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon. This landmark event was followed by four additional processes of strategic importance that impacted on the organization, its aims, and its modus operandi:

- The death of Hafez al-Asad and the rise to power of his son Bashar, who opened the doors of the Alawi community in Syria to the Iranian-Shiite dawa.

- The outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000.
- Developments in the Islamic Sunna, including the special status of al-Qaeda and the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.
- Critical developments in Iran regarding the infrastructure for the military nuclear program: first, the transition stage of converting lead metal to gas, and the stage of enriching uranium to produce fissile material that is essential for producing a nuclear bomb. Second was the announcement that the long range surface-to-surface missile system – the Shehab 3 – was operational and placed under the supervision of the Revolutionary Guards. Third, there was growing significant involvement by Iran, via Syria and Hizbollah, in Palestinian terror. This allowed Iran to implement a new defense concept, whereby Palestinian terror and Hizbollah's tactical abilities played a major role in deterring Israel from acting against the Iranian nuclear program.

Hizbollah's increased power, which reflected the interests of the organization itself as well as Iranian and Syrian policies, saw the establishment of a military system ready for the asymmetrical wars of the twenty-first century. A major component of the organization's military abilities is the multi-strata rocket array, built with Syrian and Iranian short range weapons of about 30 km to 40 km, medium range arms of about 50 km to 110 km, and weapons capable of long range strikes of 200 km or more.

At the time of the war, the geographic deployment of the rocket array was as follows:

- The operational core was in the area of Nabatiah and south of the Litani River, where there were short range rockets and camouflaged "nature reserves" that hid advanced anti-tank weapons; where fortifications were built and explosives were laid; and where a logistical system for ongoing combat was prepared.
- The operational depth, which included the medium range rockets, such as the Fajr 3, Fajr 5, 220 mm rockets, and 302 mm rockets; this array was protected by shoulder-launched missiles, probably SA-18 missiles and other anti-aircraft weapons.
- Long range rockets, including Zelzal rockets, as well as accurate Ababil unmanned aircraft with a range of about 250 km.

This deployment was supported by an accurate and advanced intelligence system that was significantly upgraded in 2004-5 and provided the organization with a sharp intelligence picture of the IDF and its designs. Moreover, the organization was built on a dual operational approach of centralization and decentralization. Decentralized synchronized operation was made possible by a good understanding among Hizbollah's fighters of the organization's targets, objectives, and operational logic. The control positions were equipped with top level intelligence and communications means, and this, together with a mobile communications facility – including motorcycles – offered the force operational flexibility. The organization was thus able to choose when to surface and when to disappear in the urban and rural surroundings that were prepared in advance. Organized training of soldiers occurred over time in areas where surveillance was difficult, particularly in the Baalbek Valley, and special training was conducted in Syria and Iran. This special training was supplemented by the establishment of advanced professional deployments manned by those steeped in combat experience, prepared for engagement with the IDF.

Intelligence's Assessment before the War

Over time and with special intelligence gathering efforts, Israeli intelligence decoded Hizbollah and was able to decipher the organization's philosophy, as well as its operational logic and policy. Military Intelligence also provided the IDF, including the air force, with accurate intelligence important for combat. Numerous covert operations undertaken in recent years helped Israel foil the organization's aggression. These operations complemented significant developments taking place in Lebanon, including the resignation and assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, Security Council resolution 1559, and Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon.

With hindsight and based on what was discovered after the war, it seems that the IDF's intelligence corps prepared well for the war with Hizbollah in all matters related to understanding the organization, its deployment in the field, and its mode of operation. Moreover, in late 2005, Intelligence presented a special update to the General Staff and the minister of defense – and sent a letter to Prime Minister Sharon – painting the intelligence picture as it had developed in Lebanon and Syria during the second half

of 2005, with an updated assessment regarding 2006. It included the following:

- Iran is determined to maintain its nuclear weapons program.
- Arms that pose a threat to Israel are being amassed in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, and there are rockets in the Palestinian Authority. This subject was a recurring feature of intelligence reports from 2003 onward.
- Due to pressure exerted on Syria and Lebanon, the likelihood that strategic arms and standoff fire would be used increased. The high possibility of escalation in the form of a Hizbollah and Syrian initiative, due to their leaders' political status and the operational measures at their disposal, was stressed.
- In conclusion, it was noted that *the possibility of escalation on the northern border would increase during 2006.*

The implications of this intelligence assessment for IDF force buildup and operation highlighted three relevant points. The first was the need to improve the IDF's response to standoff fire, especially rockets, a need that was emphasized regularly in Military Intelligence's recommendations. Second was the need to prepare for possible escalation on the northern border and strengthen the deterrent force against Hizbollah, including the organization's kidnapping attempts. Third, the increase in the asymmetric threat obliged Israel to provide a solution by means of weaponry, an updated and revised combat doctrine, new standing directives for emergency and crisis situations, updated operational orders, and preparations for the home front. Particular emphasis was given to the preparedness required for the potential use of standoff fire in 2006 by Hizbollah as well as by others.

In this special intelligence assessment Military Intelligence provided the decision makers with the relevant national intelligence, and even provided a *strategic warning* about what to expect in 2006, a message extraordinary in and of itself. (A parallel to this occurred in the discussions of April 2002 during Operation Defensive Shield, when Hizbollah attempted to drag the IDF into an additional battlefield on top of the existing Palestinian front.) This warning prompted the accurate intelligence preparations required for combat, both for the air force and the ground forces. Targets for the air force were selected and conveyed to the squadron level, auxiliary means were prepared for the ground forces at the divisional level, and a system was devised that would ensure updates and availability as required for

emergency situations. These preparations were carried out by Northern Command in conjunction with the field intelligence of the ground forces command and Military Intelligence.

In addition, Intelligence took pains in all discussions to point out that it was unable to provide the combat forces with accurate intelligence regarding the exact location of Hizbollah's short range rockets. It was explained that any measure to deal with the short range rockets would have to be based on the understanding that Military Intelligence could not provide precise, detailed intelligence on the rocket sites – even though specific information was given about the “nature reserves” and their locations. At the same time, it is important to note the air force's impressive achievement at the start of the fighting, which was based on the targets provided by Intelligence as to the medium and long range rockets, communications and control centers, storage sites, and other important targets.

From 2003 steps were taken to ensure that intelligence, including the most sensitive information, was passed on, distributed, and assimilated by the combat forces, and was thereafter updated regularly; hence the intense efforts expended to prepare and update the database, so that should war break out only recent changes would have to be inserted. The last forecast database was updated to the summer of 2005. In any case, the arguments voiced during and after the fighting regarding the lack of accurate and updated intelligence indicate a serious flaw that requires examination and correction. There must not be a situation where intelligence exists but is not disseminated to the forces. The matter demands in-depth examination at the levels of the Northern Command, the Field Intelligence Corps, the ground forces command, and the relevant sections of Military Intelligence.

Intelligence Insights

The following are the principal insights on intelligence drawn from a review of the fighting in Lebanon, particularly its successes and difficulties:

- *Participation in decision making processes.* The intelligence corps must be involved in deliberations at the General Staff with the chief of staff, as well as with the minister of defense and the prime minister with regard to the anticipated combat, its targets, and its objectives. Intelligence's understanding of the enemy allows it to analyze the

opportunities and risks of a campaign or war, and this analysis should provide the country's leaders with an understanding of what to expect from the said campaign or war. Intelligence should present the implications of the IDF plan vis-à-vis the impact on the enemy, and its view of the plan's objectives and their realization: this should ensure that the campaign or war objectives are realistic in terms of the enemy's capabilities and preparedness. This process must respect the independence of the intelligence corps, which allows it to convey the intelligence picture and its implications to the General Staff as it best understands, as well as to the minister of defense, security cabinet, and prime minister for their situation assessments.

- *Intelligence assessment independence.* Given the current structure of the intelligence community in Israel, there is particular importance in ensuring the freedom of opinion of the head of Intelligence, his freedom to convey it to the government and the prime minister, and – a lesson learned from the Yom Kippur War – the ability to appear in front of the media and express his opinion openly to the public at large. This approach does not limit the responsibility of the chief of staff for carrying out situation assessments and formulating his stance. Intelligence must be ready to present the intelligence information to the leaders professionally and without extraneous considerations, as a kind of medical specialist about the enemy and adversary. The head of Intelligence should naturally also follow this approach in his interaction with the head of the research division, who is responsible for formulating the intelligence assessment and maintains his professional independence. This method ensures that all the decision makers and commanders can obtain the intelligence picture and assessment they require for formulating a decision.
- *Amassing and implementing information about the enemy.* Part of the intelligence information should be processed together with the IDF commanders and the political leaders. It is not sufficient just to convey the information and updates. Intelligence should learn what the particular leader requires: what he knows and which information is relevant for formulating correct decisions. Implementing this information is critical, both for the combat forces and for the country's leaders. It is important to find ways of conveying the threat and building

models to train the combat forces. Such a system was established, for example, at one of the IDF's training bases for reserve troops in order to demonstrate the complexity of Hizbollah's "nature reserves" and to practice the special fighting elements expected in the field.

- *Structure and organization.* Special attention must be directed to the problem of conveying intelligence to the combat forces, and the implications of subordinating the field intelligence corps to the ground forces command. Has this measure proven itself, or has it damaged Intelligence's ability to relay information to the field? It is clear that computerizing intelligence reporting as far as the brigade level, as is done in Intelligence, requires assistance from elements outside the intelligence corps, to enable ongoing updates to the forces through digital means rather than the old manual methods. In any case, Intelligence must be responsible for the ground intelligence at all levels, from the General Staff level to the combat forces. It is not right to divide this responsibility between two units and two commanders.
- *Work processes.* Constant attention is required to improve the organization and its work processes in order to ensure ongoing renewal, pluralism, and enhanced abilities to diagnose the surrounding reality. These processes are the basis for the work plan and for securing the sources needed to understand the complex reality of the asymmetrical war. Integration is the foundation of intelligence work, and it must occur both among the various gathering systems and between them and research. Thanks to these work processes Intelligence has significantly improved its capabilities in dealing with Hizbollah: cultivating new sources, enhancing accessibility to the organization and to Lebanon in general, and improving the ability of research to provide relevant intelligence information to all levels. Nevertheless, the multi-year plan for developing intelligence sources on Hizbollah, formulated in 2004, was only partially implemented due to the shortage of resources allocated to Intelligence. Now it is important to update the multi-year plan and to ensure the provision of more resources to improve the ability to address Hizbollah, Palestinian terror, and terror from al-Qaeda.
- *Intelligence warfare,* central in an era of asymmetrical war. This area has evolved greatly in recent years, and its importance increases particularly when it is difficult to legitimize an overt operation by the

IDF and the state in main areas of national security. In the asymmetrical struggle against military and terror organizations it is imperative to adapt the rules of the game of a democratic country – without harming its legal right to defend itself – to conduct covert warfare successfully. This involves improving the abilities of the IDF and its intelligence corps to act covertly and legally to achieve important objectives for the country and the IDF. These abilities are meant to instill fear into the relevant organizations, force them to continually change their behavior, and above all, boost Israel's deterrent capability.

- *The cognitive struggle/psychological warfare*, an area that has developed significantly in the era of electronic communications, the internet, the wide range of communications networks, and the importance of relaying information. The impact on the enemy's state of mind requires synchronized action on a national level, utilizing Intelligence's expertise against the enemy. Activity in this area requires studying and drawing conclusions in order to sustain ongoing improvement.
- *Field security against increasing transparency*. One must be aware that Israel, including the IDF, has become "transparent" to its enemies and rivals. This area requires constant attention in order to ensure that areas that are sensitive to Intelligence and security remain confidential. Transparency is a result of the ability to acquire satellite images from commercial sources, from improvements in forecasting and electronic intelligence abilities, and to a great extent from the open media and its modus operandi in the democratic world and in Israel. The clear and unambiguous message in this area is that Israel is transparent to its adversaries, enemies, and of course its friends. This transparency incurs a heavy cost in human lives, due to the enemy's ability to use gathered intelligence in real time and to be ready for the IDF's moves before they happen.
- *Censorship*. Exposure in the media and the inclusion of reporters in war rooms has caused severe and unnecessary damage. Important information was relayed to the enemy during the fighting and enabled it to harm Israel. Here Israel's behavior has damaged its deterrent ability. As such, it is important at the national level to formulate a censorship policy in asymmetrical wars, and to build a control and enforcement mechanism that will ensure policy implementation.

- *Intelligence's outside links* are particularly important in view of global threats, such as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the escalation of international terror. It is hard for Israel to contend with global threats alone, and without cooperation with foreign intelligence organizations it would be hard to obtain relevant data for combating these threats. It is important to formulate coalitions for successful international action, based on accurate and updated intelligence submitted to the world's decision makers. Only international intelligence and political and defense cooperation can enable Israel to deal with the global threats successfully. In these areas it is best to maintain a low profile on Israel's actions, without reducing operational decisiveness.

The insights presented above can help analyze the war and understand the way in which it was run and, in particular, examine the effectiveness and impact of intelligence. When the professional investigations are completed it will be possible to outline the problems and how they were addressed, and to draw conclusions required for correct planning of the next war. War is a national effort that involves testing numerous systems: political, military, the home front, intelligence, foreign policy, and so on. As such, the investigations must be integrated, and not remain vertical and professional. In the modern world most areas are integrated and their impact on the enemy and adversary is cumulative. Thus, the lessons to be learned must produce cumulative results that improve Israel's ability to cope with future confrontations. The intelligence lessons, as with the conclusions of the air force, ground forces, home front, and the IDF as a whole, and those learned by the decision makers must all be integrated in order to ensure that Israel's potential is realized and that success is achieved in all future challenges.

Conclusion

Together with the work of the investigative commission appointed by the government and the investigations conducted by the IDF, it is important to carry out an up-to-date intelligence assessment that will examine the implications of the war and its ramifications on the circles around us: Hizbollah, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and the Palestinian Authority, as well as the countries with which Israel has peace agreements: Egypt and Jordan.

Conclusions are being drawn in the region, and in certain cases, states and organizations may change their policies and operations concepts. Updated and professional intelligence assessments will allow better definition of the preferred threat – the concrete threat to be selected from all the threats for which a suitable solution has to be devised – and to establish the basis needed for defining the preferred scenario. This process is essential for the General Staff situation assessment and for formulating an updated multi-year work plan from which it will be possible to produce annual work plans. This is the correct process that will lead to allocation of resources required for the IDF and correct preparation for the challenges of the future. In this regard Military Intelligence needs should also be updated and incorporated into the work plans of the GSS and the Mossad, from the perspective of the IDF's needs and national objectives. Discussion regarding the allocation of national resources for intelligence services must take place at the level of the prime minister in order to ensure that Intelligence's work is programmed in accordance with national criteria.