



## □ IDF on its territory in the face of its terrorist enemy

Land Forces Doctrine Review

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**Since its creation in 1948, Israel has experienced several waves of terrorism on its soil, terrorism partly linked to the exile of many Palestinians since the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Given the likelihood of new wars against state enemies and the near certainty of a future confrontation against hybrid enemies (terrorist organizations with military capabilities, some of which are traditionally state-owned), the Israeli army must retain the full range of capabilities to respond to the full spectrum of threats.**

Since the early 2000s, threats from terrorist organizations have become central to Israel's security: terrorist threats at the borders, but also threats related to immigration and Israel's Arab population.

Deployed on the borders as well as in contact with the population, the Israeli Army assumes de facto the following strategic functions in the face of conflicts, threats and risks of a terrorist nature: anticipation, prevention, protection, dissuasion, intervention, knowledge and assistance to dissuasion. The armed forces participate in the sanctuarization of the territory in the face of terrorism by containing the threat as far as possible within the framework of a forward defence, while contributing to the resilience of the rear.

### **An effective organization**

The organization of the command gives all its importance to the operational level. There are four major corps-level commands: North (facing Lebanon and Syria), South (facing Gaza, Sinai and a small part of Jordan), Centre (facing the West Bank) and Interior (comparable to the civil security of the territory). These fairly small headquarters make it possible to generate the forces placed under OPCON from the front command in the

event of conflict.

Israel's entire land borders are protected according to a generic scheme: an army unit based on an enhanced physical system.

The organisation of the forces adapted to the context of operational defence of the territory includes territorial units, C2 chains acculturated to the specificities of each of the fronts, and reThe organisation of the forces adapted to the operational defence context of the territory includes territorial units, C2 channels accustomed to the specificities of each front, and units made up of active units based on the principle of rotating units on the different fronts in order to be effective from the outset in the event of an operational emergency.

## **Adapted capabilities**

The Israeli army has the whole spectrum of capabilities adapted to its geographical area, ambitions and threats. It has abandoned all combat in the 3rd dimension to the Air Force, while the Army only keeps tactical drones used at brigade level. It has only limited crossing capabilities (at the anti-tank ditch level); on the other hand, faced with this type of threat, it has developed means and doctrine for underground combat. The existence of a very large mechanised armoured corps corresponds above all to the need to be able to carry out brutal local offensives while protecting its soldiers as much as possible.

The regrouping of the four commando units of the army within what would be comparable to a brigade of land special forces corresponds to the growing strength of this component, which is particularly suited to combat against enemies using modes of action specific to terrorism.

The army has tactical UAVs capable of gathering intelligence from a few kilometres deep and also uses balloons that it deploys according to the situation in a few sensitive areas.

The fight against an asymmetric enemy using terrorist modes of action requires special forces that are well-versed in techniques combining rear action, clandestine operations and human intelligence, capable of reaching the nerve centres of terrorist groups in a flexible manner.

## **A decisive institutional role**

If specialized agencies exist to fight in a non-military way against external enemies including terrorists (Mossad) and internal enemies (Shabak), if a specialized corps exists to fight against street and mob violence in certain areas (Magav in Jérusalem-East and the West Bank), the Israeli army, and in particular the army, remains in the minds of political decision-makers and the public alike, in the event of a serious terrorist event, the central institution ultimately responsible for conducting a large-scale anti-terrorist campaign.

The model of intervention developed by the Israelis in the event of a crisis allows the Prime Minister to entrust the leadership of crisis management operations either to the police or to a joint command of the Israeli army. Moreover, many officers and general officers entered politics after their military careers and it is quite common to see the Israeli military in the same way as the Israeli army. Moreover, many officers and general officers became involved in politics after their military careers and it is quite common to see interviews in the media with army chiefs of staff or front line commanders for the

army, as their opinion is so authoritative on the threat and the situation in their area.

The visibility of military leaders in office, their regular speaking engagements and the political commitment of some of them up to the highest level give the issues they raise, and in particular the fight against threats, including terrorist threats, a credibility that is often reflected in the resources allocated to them.

Whichever entity, military or police, is in charge of the command of the counter-terrorist operation, coordination is very close, particularly in the sharing of intelligence.

## **A shared spirit of defence**

Given the regional and local context, the Israeli army must be able to count on a mass of numerous and responsive units. It relies on conscription, a veritable national melting pot, although not universal. Depending on the security situation, soldiers serving in fighting units are invited to return on leave with their weapon, to move around with it to avoid being attacked or to be able to intervene against a terrorist action taking place nearby. The sight of the uniform on the streets is common in Israel, as is the sight of conscripts in arms without necessarily being on duty.

The visibility of the uniform in public places enhances the sense of security and contributes to the cohesion of society. Wearing a weapon enhances the ability to act against an impromptu terrorist attack.

The Army uses other types of human resources that cooperate with it in high-intensity combat or in the fight against terrorism :

- Reservists, who provide a valuable pool of strength for prolonged operations or to establish an advantageous balance of power;
- private armed companies, the outsourcing of a form of armed and static security to private companies. These are all ways in which the army can avoid deploying too many personnel or securing them in order to preserve its intervention capabilities;
- Armed civilians, reservists, guards, or private citizens, who are licensed to carry weapons.

Finally, the use of robotics allows the Israeli army to save the lives of its soldiers.

The faster the reaction to counter a terrorist attack, the lower the death toll. Since the security forces cannot be everywhere, the responsibility of every armed citizen is important to minimize this time. Technology can increase the speed and accuracy of warning dissemination.

The lessons learned from the Israeli Army's struggle on its national territory against an adversary using terrorist means of action are of undeniable interest to our armies in many areas: implementation of tactical procedures, cooperation with the security and intelligence forces, defence culture, management of reservists, etc... lessons consolidated by Tsahal's long and strong operational experience. This interest does not translate into a

simple willingness to apply these schemes, as the geopolitical and internal order environments in the region are not always the same. the State of Israel - if only the relationship between the internal security forces, the armed forces and the reserves - prohibit any transposition. On the other hand, the analysis of the situation in the Middle East deserves to be conducted.

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