

ISRAELI MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST GAZA, 2000–2008

The following document is a compilation of Israeli military operations that targeted the Gaza Strip exclusively (or, in several cases, primarily) during the al-Aqsa intifada up to Operation Cast Lead. It is a Gaza-focused update of an earlier document (Special Doc. A in JPS 134) cataloging all the operations launched in the West Bank and/or Gaza from the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada on 28 September 2000 to mid-November 2004. Almost all the operations in that document, as in this one, have specific names.

The first named operation to target Gaza exclusively did not take place until 6 September 2003, three years into the uprising. For almost a year after the uprising's breakout, there had been few "operations" per se, with Israel Defense Forces (IDF) action mainly taking the form of assassinations (initiated 11/9/00), massive use of firepower against demonstrations (28,000–33,000 bullets/day during October 2000 alone, according to IDF Central Command intelligence officer Yossi Kupperwasser), sealing off Palestinian population centers, and controlling roads.

Beginning in October 2000, Israeli PM Ehud Barak initiated a strategy of pressuring Palestinian Authority (PA) head Yasir Arafat to halt Palestinian violence by targeting Fatah and the PA security forces through attacks on their offices, security posts, and personnel. Voted out of office in February 2001, Barak was succeeded as prime minister by Ariel Sharon, who deepened the same approach, making routine tactics already in (somewhat sparing) use, such as the shelling of residential areas; deployment of tanks, helicopter gunships, and missiles against demonstrators; demolishing buildings; and razing Palestinian agricultural lands (in addition to the targeted assassinations). It was also Sharon who on his first day in office (7 March 2001) launched the first named operation, "Operation Bronze," though this was less an operation than a strategic plan for confronting the intifada (involving, inter alia, the division of the West Bank and Gaza Strip into units, each of which could be treated separately and isolated from its surroundings) that continues to this day. "Rules" were also established early in Sharon's tenure, though not at his bidding: After he and his colleagues within the "kitchenette" (DM Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and FM Shimon Peres) authorized F-16s to drop one-ton bombs on PA security targets in Gaza City, Nablus, Ramallah, and Tulkarm—marking Israel's first use of warplanes on the Palestinian territories since the 1967 war—the full cabinet limited (5/20/01) the kinds of military actions that could be carried out without approval by the security or full cabinet to assassinations, targeting Palestinian weapons manufacturing or storage facilities, and destroying "terrorist infrastructure."

Still, it was only as of August 2001 that IDF actions began more commonly to have the characteristics of operations (clear aim, limited timeframe, significant troop deployment, sealing the targeted area, imposition of curfew, and so on), and it was only as of Operation Colorful Journey in late February 2002 that specifically named operations became a norm. Operations were not continuous but were marked by

periodic lulls relating to political and diplomatic developments. It should be noted that lack of operations does not mean lack of military activity: Between 2000 and 2004, for example, more than twice as many Palestinian deaths occurred outside the framework of “operations.” Similarly, the designation of “operation” does not necessarily imply magnitude: They range from pinpoint operations with relatively few casualties to massive operations claiming hundreds of lives.

Most of the operations during the first few years of the intifada focused either exclusively or primarily on the West Bank. (Gaza was targeted in a secondary capacity in five of the eleven operations launched during this period.) Beginning in late March 2002, Israel’s clear focus was on destabilizing Arafat’s PA in the West Bank, with Gaza and Jericho largely spared. These West Bank operations included Operation Defensive Shield, which virtually destroyed the PA infrastructure (3/29/02–5/10/02), Operation Determined Path (launched 6/18/02), Operation Matter of Time (9/19/02–9/29/02), and Operation Vanguard (10/25/02–11/10/02). None of these operations involved Gaza.

Following the massive 2002 assaults on the West Bank, there was a ten-month lull in operations, during which time diplomacy was more intensively pursued. By September 2003, however, peace efforts had stagnated and regional dynamics had been changed by the U.S. occupation of Iraq, allowing Israel to resume military pressure on the Palestinians. Gaza was the new focus, with the Israelis’ first priority being to undermine Hamas preeminence there. Operation Automatic Gear of 9/6/03 opened the new phase. From that time forward all the way through Operation Cast Lead, almost all named operations targeted Gaza.

The Gaza operations listed below clearly reflect developments on the ground. As early as autumn 2003, Sharon began openly discussing unilaterally setting Israel’s permanent borders if the Palestinians failed to acquiesce in Israel’s negotiating demands, and by February 2004 he had officially presented his idea for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza to U.S. pres. George W. Bush as part of a “disengagement” plan that would also include evacuation of several West Bank settlements. Eleven operations—from October 2003 to January 2005—lay the ground for disengagement. The first four primarily involved bulldozing Palestinian residential areas to establish buffer zones along the northern and southern Gaza borders. For the remaining pre-disengagement operations, the focus shifted to “rooting out terrorist infrastructure” and preventing rocket fire into Israel. The period between January 2005 and the actual unilateral disengagement, which was completed on 20 September 2005, was marked by another “lull,” this one resulting from a unilateral Palestinian cease-fire.

Immediately after completing the Gaza disengagement, Israel stepped up assassinations in the West Bank, prompting Gaza factions to fire rockets and mortars into Israel, usually without causing damage or injuries. Two operations followed in short order, significantly named First Rain and Starting All Over Again, both intended to set the new “rules of the game” for Gaza, to break the cycle of Palestinians in Gaza responding to Israeli violence in the West Bank, and to encourage the PA to capitalize on the “new reality” to take firm control of Gaza’s security situation.

The operations in the immediate wake of the disengagement are the few in our compilation that involve the West Bank as well as Gaza, albeit secondarily.

As of December 2005, Israel began a new pattern of open-ended operations against Gaza aimed at suppressing Palestinian resistance and deepening Israel's defensive buffer zones inside Gaza territory. Even while the Israeli government transitioned from Sharon (incapacitated by a stroke in 1/06) to PM Ehud Olmert, IDF operations flowed seamlessly from one into another, leaving Gaza the target of almost constant military operations—involving air strikes, assassinations, mock air raids, artillery shelling, ground incursions, and arrest raids—from December 2005 through November 2006. Meanwhile, Hamas had won the parliamentary elections in January 2006, and in February 2006, even before the new Hamas-led government had been installed, Israel imposed a siege on the Strip, limiting imports and exports in a failed effort to compel Hamas either to moderate its positions or opt against forming a government. (After a Hamas-led government took office in March 2006, Israel declared the Hamas-led PA a hostile entity in April 2006 and maintained the Gaza siege, while the international community boycotted anyone affiliated to Hamas, routing all assistance previously given to the PA directly to Mahmud Abbas, who had become PA president and Fatah head after Arafat's death in 11/04.)

In late 11/06, Abbas secured an unwritten six-month cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian factions in Gaza (minus Islamic Jihad), and violence decreased significantly. Thus, from 12/06 to 2/08, there were no named operations, though incidents of IDF air strikes, cross-border and naval fire, and bulldozing inside the Gaza border continued, as did Israel's siege. In January 2007, after more than a year of sustained operations against Gaza, with little result, Israel changed tactics, adding to its military response new coordination with the United States and Abbas to destabilize the Hamas-led PA government (predominantly in Gaza), inter alia, by arming Fatah cadres in Gaza and encouraging them to challenge Hamas control there. The strategy ultimately backfired when Hamas, concerned about the shift of power balance that would result from the inflow of foreign arms shipments to Fatah, preemptively seized control of Gaza and ousted Fatah in June 2007. In response, Israel intensified the siege and declared "economic warfare" on Gaza (January 2008), banning all Gaza exports and severely tightening imports to allow only basic humanitarian goods into the Strip. Soon after, Israel began serious planning for a major military incursion into the Gaza Strip to unseat Hamas, launching Operation Hot Winter in late 2/08 as an apparent test run for retaking Gaza's population centers. Operation Cast Lead (OCL) followed, after months of planning, in December 2008. (See "Prelude to Operation Cast Lead" for a detailed background of events related to Gaza in the run-up to OCL.)

The operations listed below are those that were approved by the Israeli security cabinet or full cabinet and publicly announced; the specific designations are by the IDF. All quotes relating to aims are from Israeli officials or spokespersons. Given the fact that some of the operations do not differ in any discernable way from many IDF concentrated actions against given localities, it is very likely that there have been a number of "operations" named as such by the IDF that have not been made public.

The list, as indicated above, includes only those operations where Gaza is the exclusive or primary target. Gaza was a secondary target in the following five operations: Operation Bronze (3/7/01–6/14/01); the Mofaz Plan (8/9/01–9/17/01); the second operation against the PA security forces (12/3/01–12/10/01); “Rolling Response” to Hamas (2/11/02–2/21/02); and Operation Colorful Journey (2/28/02–3/19/02). (For details, see Special Doc. A in JPS 134.)

This document was compiled by IPS Senior Research Associate Michele K. Esposito.

The following abbreviations for the Palestinian factions apply: AMB = al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades; ARB = Abu Risb Brigades; IJ = Islamic Jihad; PFLP = Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; PRC = Popular Resistance Committees.

Operation Automatic Gear, 9/6/03

*A pinpoint strike to assassinate Hamas’s senior leadership via a 550-lb. bomb dropped on a 3-story residential building in **Gaza City** where Hamas founder and spiritual leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin and several senior Hamas leaders (reportedly including chief bomb-maker Muhammad Dayif, senior leader Adnan al-Gul, and Yasin adviser and future PM Ismail Haniyeh) were meeting. The attack lightly injured Yasin and 14 others (12 of them bystanders). (See Washington Post 8/27/06 for a long article on Israeli planning and thinking behind the strike.)*

Operation Root Canal, 10/10/03–10/19/03

*Seizure and clearance of a strip of land in **Rafah** along the Egyptian border. Seventeen Palestinians killed; upward of 100 Palestinians and 1 IDF soldier wounded; more than 300 Palestinian homes demolished or severely damaged.*

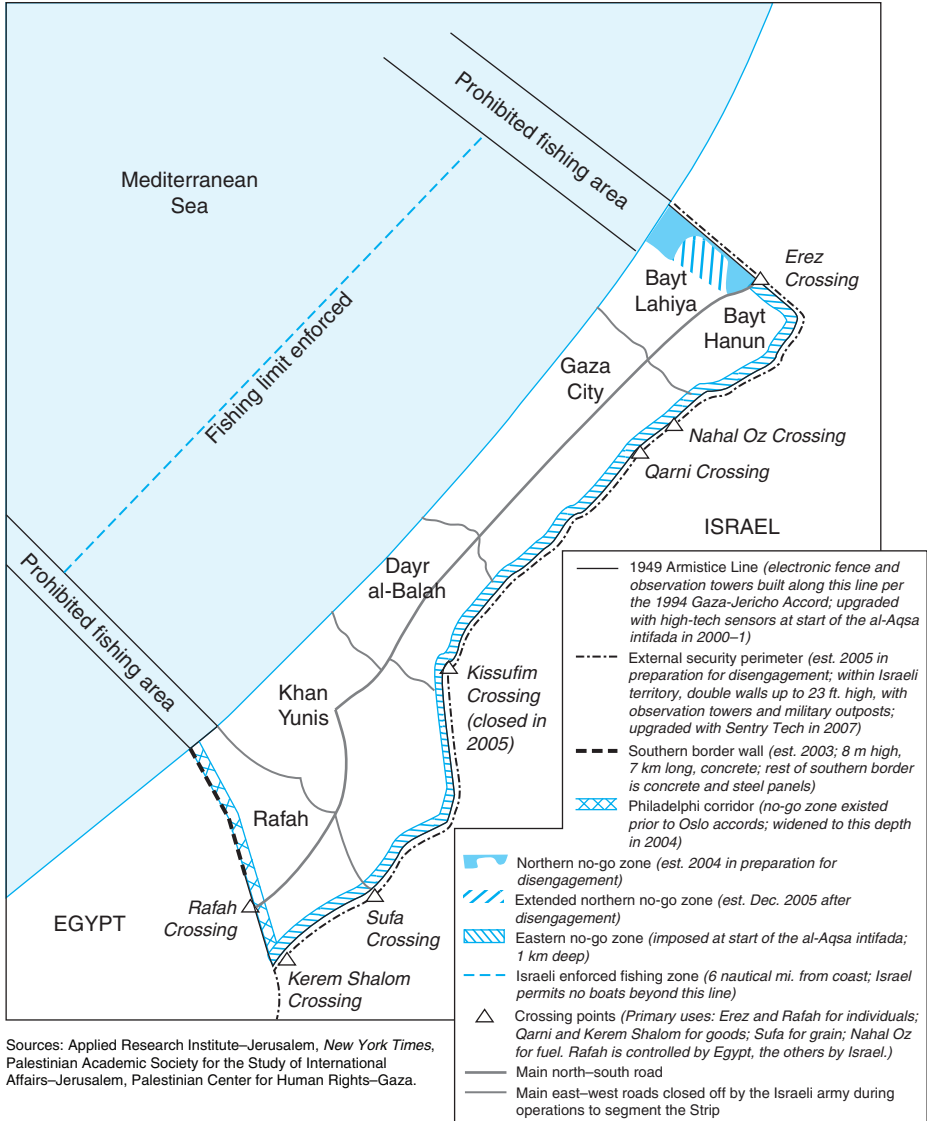
On 10/10, some 100 tanks were sent into Rafah allegedly to look for smugglers’ tunnels (only 3 were sealed during the operation). The IDF seized a strip of land along the border with Egypt running through Rafah’s Yibna, J block, and O block neighborhoods, clashing with AMB and Hamas members who tried to bar their advance. Residents of this “front-line area” were ordered to evacuate their homes, which were then bulldozed to create an empty zone along the border up to 150 m deep. The IDF withdrew to “regroup and refresh” on 10/19, officially ending the operation.

Operation Continuous Story, 3/15/04–c. 4/5/04

*Raids, assassinations, and bulldozing operations, particularly in **Rafah**, to eliminate “top figures from all terror organizations.” Thirty-seven Palestinians killed, at least 80 wounded, 111 houses demolished or severely damaged, more than 100 dunams (25 acres) of land bulldozed.*

On 2/23/04, Israeli PM Sharon announced that since the PA had failed to halt all violence, he would ask U.S. president Bush to recognize Israel’s security lines in the occupied territories as a “long-term interim arrangement.” On 3/1, an Israeli team arrived in Washington to discuss practical steps needed to carry out a unilateral disengagement from Gaza. On 3/2, the IDF announced plans to “eliminate as many terrorists as possible” in Gaza before unilateral withdrawal, and on 3/14, following a Hamas suicide bombing launched the same day from Gaza in Ashdod port (11 dead,

Israeli Operational Map of Gaza, December 2008



20 wounded), the Israeli security cabinet approved Operation Continuous Story, authorizing the IDF and Shin Bet to “act without limitations against top figures from all terror organizations.”

Over the next 3 weeks, the IDF stepped up assassinations (most notably of Hamas spiritual leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin on 3/22), bulldozing operations, raids, and house demolitions across Gaza (especially in Rafah). Israel scaled back operations and sealed the Strip on 4/5 for the Passover holidays and in anticipation of a Bush-Sharon meeting in Washington on 4/14, but the end of Operation Continuous Story was never officially announced.

Operation Rainbow, 5/13/04–5/24/04

Ground assault and bulldozing operations in southern Gaza (Rafah and Brazil camp) to widen the strip along the Egyptian border in connection with Sharon’s unilateral disengagement plan. At least 43 Palestinians killed, 100s wounded, 1,000s temporarily displaced, 167 homes demolished or severely damaged, 725 dunams (181 acres) of land leveled.

The operation was launched against the background of an upsurge in violence triggered by Israel’s 4/17/04 assassination of Abd al-‘Aziz Rantisi, Yasin’s replacement as Hamas head. After a particularly violent clash between the IDF and members of Hamas and IJ during an Israeli raid on Gaza City on 5/11-12 that left 15 Palestinians and 6 IDF soldiers dead and some 170 Palestinians injured, IJ attacked (5/12) an IDF convoy in the Israeli buffer zone (the Philadelphi route) along the Rafah-Egypt border, killing 5 soldiers and injuring 3.

Operation Rainbow (not formally named until 5/17) began on 5/13, the day after the IJ attack, as a major bulldozing operation in Rafah (similar to but larger than Operation Root Canal) to widen the Philadelphi route, leaving 12 Palestinians dead, nearly 300 wounded, 1,000s displaced, and 80-120 homes demolished in two days. On 5/15, the Israeli High Court ordered a halt to the bulldozing pending a ruling on a petition submitted by Palestinian human rights groups challenging the operation’s legality on the grounds of military necessity; the court ruled on 5/16 that there was a “real, imminent need” to widen the buffer zone. The next day, the IDF resumed demolitions, sending 1,000 troops and 100 tanks and armored bulldozers into Rafah and neighboring Brazil camp. Bulldozing continued until 5/24, when the IDF withdrew to regroup. Wide-scale bulldozing resumed in Rafah on 5/28 but was not officially declared a continuation of Operation Rainbow.

Operation Active Shield, 6/28/04–8/5/04

Bulldozing operations in northern Gaza (Bayt Hanun and Jabaliya camp) to widen the buffer zone and crush resistance. At least 22 Palestinian killed, 200 wounded, 15 homes demolished, around 3,900 dunams (975 acres) cleared.

Officially aimed at halting Hamas rocket fire into Israel, the operation’s true purpose was to widen the buffer zone along the northern Gaza border with Israel (similar to Operation Rainbow in southern Gaza) and to crush the Palestinian resistance there in advance of unilateral disengagement. The IDF imposed a 24-hour curfew on Bayt

Hanun and Jabaliya camp that lasted 5 weeks, fired on anyone outside their homes, and bulldozed the main transportation arteries, houses, and wide tracks of agricultural land to create an 8-km empty zone around the two localities.

Operation to Widen the North Gaza Buffer Zone, 9/8/04–9/11/04

Follow-up bulldozing operations in northern Gaza (Bayt Hanun, Bayt Labiya, and Jabaliya). Eight Palestinians killed, 100 wounded, 50 homes demolished or severely damaged, 90 dunams (23 acres) leveled.

Allegedly responding to more Hamas rocket fire from northern Gaza into Israel (which damaged a car but caused no injuries), the IDF made a major 4-day incursion into Bayt Hanun, Bayt Labiya, and Jabaliya, heavily shelling residential areas and continuing bulldozing operations to widen the northern buffer zone in an apparent extension of Operation Active Shield.

Operation Days of Penitence, 10/1/04–10/15/04

Prolonged ground offensive in northern Gaza (Bayt Hanun, Bayt Labiya, and Jabaliya) to root out “terrorist infrastructure” and pressure the civilian population of Gaza, especially in the north. Eighty-seven Palestinians killed (120 including the number of deaths during the 24 hours before the operation was officially announced), at least 234 wounded, 195 homes demolished or severely damaged, 1,000 dunams (250 acres) leveled.

In the lead-up to the operation, Palestinians in late 9/04 had stepped up rocket fire from northern Gaza on nearby Jewish settlements and into Israel. Though the damage was very minor, the IDF intensified attacks on Bayt Hanun, Bayt Labiya, and Jabaliya, and in the escalating return fire a rocket launched at Sederot (9/29) killed 2 Israelis. Violent clashes over the next 24 hours killed at least 33 Palestinians, 2 IDF soldiers, and 1 Jewish settler, with some 200 Palestinians wounded and 22 Palestinian homes demolished. Late that day, the Israeli security cabinet approved Operation Days of Penitence, to “apply heavy pressure on the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip in an effort to compel residents to prevent the firing of Qassam rockets into Israel proper,” improve the defenses of settlements in the area, and root out the “terrorist infrastructure.”

The following day, the IDF sent 2,000 troops with 300 tanks and armored bulldozers into northern Gaza to seize control of a 9-km² coastal strip and a 10-km-deep buffer zone along the border, cordoning off and searching north Gaza villages and camps, imposing a 24-hour curfew, and cutting electricity and water. Over the succeeding days, the IDF shelled, fired on, and bulldozed residential areas, damaging or demolishing at least 195 homes (leaving 854 Gazans homeless), 36 industrial workshops, and 19 public facilities (including 5 UNRWA schools, a PA school, at least 2 private kindergartens, and as many as 8 mosques and 1 clinic). Palestinians retaliated with gunfire, antitank missiles, and booby traps, causing no reported IDF injuries. Under intense international pressure and concerns within the IDF that the operation was becoming a PR liability, the IDF withdrew to the outskirts of the villages on 10/15 (the beginning of Ramadan), ending the operation. The UN assessed the damage at \$3 b.

Operation King's Court, 10/24/04–10/26/04

*Air and ground offensive to deter mortar fire from **Khan Yunis** on nearby Jewish settlements. Seventeen Palestinians killed, at least 74 wounded, at least 29 homes demolished.*

The reason cited for the massive raid was the 30-some mortars launched from Khan Yunis on nearby Jewish settlements following the 10/21 assassination of Adnan al-Gul, the Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades' second-in-command and a founding member of Hamas. (Israel, which considered him responsible for developing Qassam rockets, had tried to assassinate him on at least four previous occasions.)

The ground operation was reinforced by pilotless drones and air strikes against Palestinians who confronted invading troops. The 17 Palestinian dead in the raid were 3 PA security officers, 6 armed men, and 8 civilians. The IDF withdrew on 10/26.

Operation Orange Iron, 12/17/04–12/18/04

*Raid on **Khan Yunis** to demolish homes allegedly providing cover for Palestinian rocket and mortar fire. Eleven Palestinians killed, 53 wounded, 39 homes demolished.*

During the week prior to Orange Iron, the first major operation since Yasir Arafat's death on 11/10/04, the IDF declared that an estimated 30 rockets and mortars had been fired from the Khan Yunis area, killing 1 Thai worker and wounding 17 Israelis in southern Gaza settlements. On 12/15, IJ and the Fatah Hawks staged a joint attack on an IDF post at Gaza's Kissufim crossing, wounding 4 IDF soldiers and 1 Israeli civilian. Additional Palestinian mortar fire on 12/16 injured 11 IDF soldiers at an IDF post outside Atzmona settlement in southern Gaza. Israel launched the raid the next day, shelling and firing missiles from helicopters at residential areas, clashing with local Palestinian gunmen, and prompting 100s of Palestinians to flee the area. Troops withdrew midday on 12/18, after leveling 39 homes that allegedly provided cover for mortar fire.

Operation Violet Iron, 12/22/04–1/2/05

*Ongoing maneuvers in the **Khan Yunis** area with the stated aim of quelling Palestinian rocket fire on southern Gaza settlements. Eleven Palestinians killed, at least 36 wounded, 14 houses completely demolished, 21 heavily damaged.*

When Palestinians resumed rocket and mortar fire on southern Gaza settlements after the IDF withdrew from Khan Yunis at the close of Operation Orange Iron on 12/18, the IDF on 12/22 launched what it said would be open-ended maneuvers in and around Khan Yunis to quell Palestinian attacks. The operation involved attempted assassinations on 2 local Hamas leaders, clashes with local gunmen, and shelling residential areas. By the time troops pulled back on 1/2, 11 Palestinians (8 armed men, including a local Hamas leader; 3 civilians) had been killed, at least 36 wounded, 14 houses completely demolished, 21 heavily damaged.

Operation Autumn Wind, 1/2/05

*A 1-day ground incursion into **northern Gaza** (**Bayt Hanun**, **Bayt Labiya**, and **Jabaliya**) aimed at halting Palestinian rocket fire from northern Gaza toward Israel. One Palestinian seriously injured.*

Autumn Wind, similar to operations Orange Iron and Violet Iron, was launched when Palestinians in northern Gaza fired 7 rockets in 3 days at the Erez industrial zone and Sederot, Israel, wounding 2 Israelis. In response, the IDF sent ground forces into northern Gaza to surround Bayt Hanun, Bayt Lahiya, and Jabaliya refugee camp (r.c.). Troops fired on residential areas, seriously injuring a Palestinian journalist covering the operation, but withdrew later in the day without taking massive punishing steps.

Operation Eastern Step, 1/15/05–1/17/05

Pinpoint attacks on and around Gaza City with the stated aim of halting Palestinian mortar and rocket fire from the area. Five Palestinians (2 resistance members, 3 civilians) were killed, at least 13 wounded, at least 80 dunams (20 acres) of land bulldozed.

Days after Mahmud Abbas was elected as PA president on 1/10, replacing Arafat, who died in 11/04, Israeli-Palestinian violence escalated on 1/13, with a joint AMB-Hamas-PRC attack on IDF soldiers stationed at Qarni crossing that killed 4 Israeli civilian workers and 2 Israeli-Palestinian truck drivers and wounded 10 people. The IDF immediately made air strikes on Dayr al-Balah (suspected home of the assailants); the next day, sealed the Strip and suspended contacts with the PA, saying that Abbas was not moving quickly enough to crack down on “terror”; and on the morning of 1/15, launched Operation Eastern Step, billed as pinpoint attacks to halt Palestinian rocket and mortar fire. The IDF shelled residential areas, raided and occupied buildings as observation posts, bulldozed Palestinian land, and sparked clashes with Palestinians that left 5 Palestinians dead and 13 wounded. Israel halted operations after Abbas convened (1/17) an emergency session of his national security council and ordered PA security forces to exert “maximum efforts” to stop Palestinian attacks, including setting up security zones and road blocks to deter Palestinian fire.

[After Eastern Step, 9 months were to pass without an Israeli operation (although occasional raids, assassinations, and incidents of cross-border fire continued). On 1/24, the Gaza factions announced a 1-month unilateral cease-fire while talks on a long-term Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire could be held, offering Israel a formal truce if it would halt assassinations. Israel initially agreed only to “meet quiet with quiet,” halting “offensive operations” in Gaza after several days of Palestinian calm, but on 2/8 Abbas and Sharon agreed to a mutual cease-fire. The Gaza factions agreed to observe the truce through the end of the year.

Despite the relative success of the cease-fire, by early 5/05, Sharon instructed the IDF to plan a series of “iron fist operations” in Gaza, to be known as Operation Summer’s End, in the event of Palestinian violence during Israel’s disengagement from Gaza, then scheduled for 8/05. According to Yedi’ot Aharonot (5/6/05), the operations could begin even before disengagement started “so that on the day of the evacuation, there is quiet.” In fact, Operation Summer’s End remained on the drawing board, and the unilateral disengagement was completed by 9/20/05.]

Operation First Rain, 9/24/05–10/2/2005

Israel’s first post-disengagement operation against Gaza, intended to set the new “rules of the game” and in expectation that the PA would capitalize on the “new

reality” to take firm control of Gaza’s security situation. At least 2 Palestinians killed, 46 wounded.

Three days after Israel’s disengagement from Gaza, Israel resumed (9/23) assassinations targeting IJ in the West Bank. Responding to this and a mysterious explosion at a Hamas rally in Gaza initially believed (falsely) to be an Israeli air strike, IJ and Hamas resumed (9/23) rocket fire from Gaza into Israel that continued through the morning of 9/24. Israel responded with helicopter and F-16 air strikes on **northern Gaza**, assassinating 3 Hamas members, directing naval fire on Palestinian fishermen off the Gaza coast, and massing tanks and artillery on the north Gaza border.

Though Hamas and IJ ceased fire early on 9/24, Israel authorized and launched Operation First Rain late that evening, declaring it necessary to set the “rules of the game” following disengagement, emphasizing in particular that Gazan retaliation for incidents in the West Bank would not be tolerated. The IDF used artillery, air strikes, and assassinations in an “all-out offensive” to strike AMB, Fatah, Hamas, and PFLP targets across Gaza, simultaneously threatening to send troops back into the Strip if the situation did not remain calm. (In parallel, but not officially part of the operation, the IDF conducted massive arrest sweeps and raids on Islamic charities in the West Bank, detaining more than 400 Palestinians, mostly affiliated with Hamas and IJ.)

Though Hamas formally pledged (9/25) not to fire more rockets, and all factions reaffirmed the 2/05 Sharm al-Shaykh cease-fire on 9/27, IDF artillery and air strikes continued for more than a week. Israel suspended operations on 10/2, stating that it had “made it clear to everyone that there is a new situation here.”

Operation Starting All Over Again, 10/26/04–10/30/05

*Operations in **Gaza and the West Bank** targeting IJ and Hamas intended to send the message that Israel would respond forcefully to rocket and mortar attacks emanating from Gaza and would not tolerate Gazans staging reprisals for incidents in the West Bank. Marks Israel’s first effort permanently to cantonize the northern West Bank. Nine Palestinians killed, at least 25 wounded.*

Prior to the operation’s launch, reciprocal Israeli-Palestinian violence sparked by Israel’s 10/24 assassination of an IJ military commander in the West Bank and retaliatory IJ rocket fire from Gaza into Israel escalated (10/24–26) into IDF air strikes and artillery fire on open areas of northern Gaza used for rocket launching and on an IJ building in Rafah. Several PA security force sites in north Gaza were shelled from the sea (to punish the PA for failing to control the security situation), Gaza border crossings were closed, and parts of Bayt Hanun (near the north Gaza border) were declared closed military zones.

On 10/26, IJ struck back with a suicide bombing in Hadera, Israel, killing 5 Israelis and wounding 20. Late in the evening, the Israeli cabinet approved Operation Starting All Over Again, which it described as a “broad and nonstop” offensive against “terrorism” in the West Bank and Gaza to continue until “terrorism” ends. Urging Palestinians in northern Gaza not to leave their homes, the IDF began air strikes on northern areas, conducted round-the-clock sonic booms over Gaza (UNRWA reported more than 350 windows blown out in its facilities alone), and assassinated a senior IJ commander (killing 5 others, including 3 bystanders, and wounding 19). IJ fired rockets, mortars,

and antitank shells into Israel during the operation, causing no damage or injuries. (Hamas did not take part.) In the West Bank, IDF action mainly comprised arrest raids targeting IJ and Hamas members, mostly in Jenin and Nablus. (Critically, however, the IDF began work on a major new checkpoint at Tapuach Junction south of Nablus, intended permanently to sever the Nablus and Jenin districts from the rest of the West Bank, creating a northern West Bank canton.) On 10/30, IJ offered to cease firing if Israel reciprocated, but within hours Israel assassinated another 2 IJ commanders in the West Bank near Jenin, killing 1 bystander and wounding 6. IJ fired rockets from Gaza into Israel in response, causing no damage or injuries. The exchanges petered out thereafter, though Israel never formally declared an end to operations.

Unnamed Operation Targeting Northern Gaza, launched 12/5/05

*A multifaceted, open-ended operation with the stated purpose of halting rocket fire from **northern Gaza**, but that also included parallel operations in the **West Bank**. At least 14 Palestinians were killed, at least 11 of them assassinated.*

After nearly a week of Palestinian rocket and mortar fire and Israeli shelling and air strikes across the Gaza border, an IJ member from Jenin carried out a suicide bombing in Netanya, Israel, on 12/5, killing 5 Israelis and wounding 31. In response, the Israeli security cabinet called (12/5) for a harsher response against Gaza to last up to a month. Immediately, the IDF began (12/5) attacks on suspected rocket-launching sites in built-up and open areas of northern Gaza, sealed West Bank and Gaza borders, stepped up assassinations, and carried out major arrest raids across the West Bank targeting IJ. Between 12/5 and 12/18, the IDF conducted 96 air strikes mostly targeting Gaza roads and bridges, fired 95 tank shells mostly on northern Gaza, opened fire across the Gaza border at least 25 times, assassinated at least 11 Palestinians (5 AMB members and 1 PRC member in Gaza; 3 AMB members, 1 Hamas member, and 1 PFLP member in the West Bank; also killing at least 2 bystanders), and detained more than 120 IJ members. The attack was superseded by Operation Blue Skies (see below).

Operation Blue Skies, launched 12/25/05

*An open-ended operation aimed at halting Palestinian rocket and mortar fire from Gaza, in part by expanding the **northern Gaza** no-go zone between the coast and the Erez crossing to a depth of 1.5 km. As many as 31 Palestinians were killed (including 17 assassinated) and dozens were wounded, though precise tallies are difficult given the operation's open-ended nature.*

With continuing Palestinian rocket and mortar fire from Gaza and the IJ's launch of a long-range Qassam on Ashqelon that wounded 5 IDF soldiers, Israel's security cabinet authorized (12/22) Operation Blue Skies; the operation was not launched until 12/25, when PM Sharon, temporarily incapacitated on 12/20 by a minor stroke, gave the final order. Between 12/25 and **Palestinian elections on 1/25/06**, the operation entailed IDF air and artillery strikes on roads and access points into the northern Gaza no-go zone (which the IDF had expanded by 12/28 to a depth of 1.5 km), firing on rocket-launching sites, and conducting mock air raids on a near-daily basis, killing at least 3 Palestinian civilians. In addition, the IDF assassinated 3 IJ members and 1 PRC member

in Gaza. Starting from the launch of the operation, Israel kept Gaza borders closed for long periods and barred Palestinian agricultural exports (at peak harvest).

In response, the AMB, ARB, IJ, and PRCs stepped up their rocket fire and declared that they would make no effort to restore or extend the 2/05 Sharm al-Shaykh truce when it formally expired on 12/31. Hamas did not take part in the cross-border attacks, saying it would observe the truce until the Palestinian elections and then reassess its position.

The operation was unofficially suspended around the time of the election but resumed officially on 2/3/06 when an IJ rocket fired from Gaza injured 3 Israelis. (After its 1/25 election win, Hamas continued to observe a truce.) Closures continued, Israel escalated assassinations (killing 7 AMB members and 3 IJ members and making attempts on at least 3 other unidentified militants in Gaza by 2/15), and the IDF kept up artillery strikes on Gaza at a rate of 20–23/day into at least 3/08. Because Operation Blue Skies was never officially declared over and the tactics used had become standard operating procedure, the operation effectively continued until it was superseded by Operation Southern Arrow, launched 4/4/06. By that date, at least 31 Gazans had been killed (including at least 17 assassinated) and dozens wounded since the start of Blue Skies on 12/25/05.

Operation Southern Arrow, launched 4/4/06

*An intensification of Operation Blue Skies aimed at ending Palestinian rocket fire, Southern Arrow introduced a response ratio of roughly 25 artillery shells fired on Gaza for each Palestinian rocket or mortar fired into Israel, and marked **the first ground incursion into Gaza since disengagement**. Since the operation was open-ended, tallies are difficult to determine. At least 23 Palestinians killed, 84 wounded.*

A 3/30 suicide attack near Nablus that killed 4 Jewish settlers triggered a 4/3 IDF assassination of the AMB's West Bank commander, which in turn triggered retaliatory Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza into Israel (causing no injuries), which finally led the IDF to launch (4/4) another open-ended operation dubbed Operation Southern Arrow. Essentially an intensification of Operation Blue Skies, the IDF stepped up mock air raids over Gaza, aimed artillery fire significantly closer to Palestinian residential areas, installed a new artillery battery on the south Gaza border near Kerem Shalom crossing, and imposed a policy of responding to Palestinian rocket fire with IDF artillery fire at a ratio of 1 : 25. By 4/9, the IDF fired more than 750 shells in response to 40 rockets fired by Palestinians, mostly IJ.

After a 4/17 IJ suicide bombing in Tel Aviv killed 11 Israelis and wounded 57, the IDF escalated the operation, adding observation towers and new posts along the Gaza border, sending bulldozers into Gaza to clear lines of sight along the border, and stepping up shelling. By 5/14, the IDF reported having fired more than 5,100 shells into Gaza since 3/30, retaliating for about 200 Palestinian rockets, which caused no reported damage or injuries. As of 5/14, 3 Palestinians had been killed and 43 wounded by artillery fire; another 16 Palestinians had been killed in targeted assassinations (6 ARB, 4 PRC, 2 AMB members, 2 IJ members, and 2 bystanders) with 34 (including

28 bystanders) wounded. Another 5 IJ members were targeted but not harmed. Numerous homes and commercial buildings had also been damaged in the strikes.

In a precedent-setting operation on 5/29, the IDF sent ground forces into Gaza to ambush and kill 3 IJ members preparing rockets, bulldozed the area to clear lines of sight, and then withdrew. Israeli helicopters then crossed the border and fired on the site, wounding 4 Palestinian medics and 2 journalists who had arrived on the scene, later returning to fire on Hamas-affiliated PA security forces investigating the incident, killing 1 officer and wounding a bystander. Like its predecessor Blue Skies, Operation Southern Arrow was never officially ended, and like Blue Skies it could be argued to have continued until superseded by the next operation, Operation Summer Rains, on 6/27.

Operation Summer Rains, launched 6/27/06

*Launched in response to the capture of IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit on the southern Gaza border, the prolonged **Gaza-wide** ground offensive (the first since disengagement) with air strikes was originally intended to recover the soldier, but as of 7/1/06 the goal became to eradicate Gaza's "terrorist infrastructure" and destabilize the Hamas-led PA. Like its three predecessors, it was open-ended. At least 48 Gazans were killed and more than 100 injured in the initial phase of the operation up to 7/8. In the weeks (and arguably months) that followed, 100s of Palestinian homes were demolished, 1,000s of dunams of agricultural land razed, and 100s of Palestinians killed and wounded across the Strip.*

Overnight on 6/27-28, the IDF launched Operation Summer Rains, initially with the aim of freeing Cpl. Gilad Shalit (captured in a joint Hamas-PRC-Army of Islam attack on the Kerem Shalom crossing). Ground troops sent into southern Gaza seized the Dahaniya airport site and destroyed bridges linking southern and central Gaza, while more troops massed on the north Gaza border with threats of a northern ground incursion if Palestinian rocket fire intensified. Meanwhile, air strikes and heavy artillery assaults were carried out against militant targets and Palestinian infrastructure across Gaza, including the Gaza electric plant, blacking out 45% of the Strip and leaving it dependent on power from Israel. (Simultaneously, Israeli PM Ehud Olmert authorized massive arrest raids across the West Bank on 6/28-29, detaining 64 senior Hamas political officials, including 8 PA cabinet ministers and 26 Hamas-affiliated PC members, plus an additional 23 senior Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades members.)

On 7/1, after it became clear that Shalit's whereabouts would not soon be known, Operation Summer Rains was refocused on punishing and destabilizing the Hamas-led government, and the Israeli security cabinet gave its approval to escalate ground attacks on Gaza, including reoccupying former settlement sites as needed to eradicate Gaza's "terrorist infrastructure"; further cutting fuel, electricity, water delivery, and sewage treatment to Gaza; and striking the PA Interior Min. complex, PA intelligence offices, and Hamas-affiliated Executive Support Force (ESF) posts across Gaza.

On 7/3, the Givati Brigade moved tanks and troops into northern Gaza, occupying the outskirts of Bayt Hanun, the Erez industrial zone, and the former Nisanit settlement site;

ordered PA security forces to withdraw; seized Palestinian homes as operational bases; bulldozed land and a PA security building in search of roadside bombs and tunnels; and conducted air strikes. After Hamas responded by firing 2 dual-stage Qassam 2 rockets on Ashqelon (damaging a school), the IDF escalated (7/5) operations further, pouring more troops into northern Gaza, pushing south to Jabaliya r.c., and reoccupying former settlement sites along the north Gaza coast as bases for launching incursions into Palestinian built-up areas (especially Bayt Lahiya). Palestinians engaged ground troops with RPGs, rifles, and roadside bombs, as well as firing some 25 rockets into Israel (lightly injuring 3 Israelis). The IDF pulled out of northern Gaza overnight on 7/7-8 but the next day (7/8) intensified operations in southern Gaza and initiated a daylong ground incursion into eastern Gaza near Qarni crossing, shelling areas around Gaza City. By 7/8, 48 Gazans had been killed and more than 100 injured.

On 7/9, Olmert had declared IDF intentions to “operate, enter, and pull out [of Gaza] as needed,” for as long as it took to accomplish the aims. Ground troops were withdrawn from southern Gaza on 7/12. Thereafter, the IDF began routinely launching daylong (occasionally longer) ground incursions into northern, central, and southern Gaza almost equally. (According to some sources, the IDF unofficially named this phase of Summer Rains “Operation Grasshopper,” alluding to how troops would hop in and out of Gaza.) From mid-7/06 through 8/06, operations were particularly heavy: Daily Israeli air strikes (221 in 7/06 alone) targeted the homes of leading militants and PA government offices, including the offices of the PA PM, the FMin., Interior Min., and Economics Min., and numerous ESF posts. The IDF fired artillery into Gaza at a rate of 200-250 shells/day. By 7/31, 100s of Palestinian homes had been demolished, an estimated 3,666 dunams (906 acres) of land had been bulldozed, and damage to Gaza’s infrastructure was placed at \$15.5 m. By 8/15, at least 213 Gazans had been killed and 650 wounded since the launch of Summer Rains.

The intensity of operations slowed somewhat in 9/06 through 10/12/06, with shelling dropping to an average of 40/day, though no week went by without ground incursions; throughout, arrest raids, massive land leveling, bulldozing of homes and greenhouses, further destruction of water and electricity networks, and assassinations took place, leaving at least another 15 Palestinians dead and 25 injured. (A least 4 of the dead were targeted for assassination, with Israel making failed attempts on another 5.) The IDF also reoccupied a strip of land inside the southern Gaza border between the Kerem Shalom crossing and Rafah. Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza into Israel also continued at a rate of around 1 rocket/day, injuring 3 Israelis between 9/1 and 10/12. Fighting began to escalate again after Israel attempted to assassinate a senior Hamas commander in Gaza City on 10/12. Once again, the operation was never officially declared over and could be considered to have continued until it was superseded by Operation Autumn Clouds on 11/1/06.

Operation Summer Rains: Suboperations

While most ground incursions after the first 2 weeks of Operation Summer Rains lasted only a day, some lasted longer and at least 2 were even given their own operational names:

Operation Samson's Pillars, 7/26/06–7/28/06

A 3-day incursion into northern Gaza and the Gaza City environs; 27 Palestinians killed, at least 66 wounded.

The suboperation involved intense ground engagements with, and air strikes on, Palestinian gunmen in north Gaza and areas on the northern outskirts of Gaza City. Israeli troops leveled at least 80 dunams (20 acres) of Palestinian land, demolished 9 homes, heavily damaged 16 others, killed at least 14 Palestinian gunmen and 13 civilians, and wounded at least 66.

Operation Locked Kindergarten, 8/27/06–8/31/06

A suboperation of Operation Summer Rains targeting Gaza City; 19 Palestinians killed, at least 30 wounded.

The IDF sent troops, tanks, bulldozers, and helicopters into the eastern neighborhoods of Gaza City to uproot the “terrorist infrastructure” there, warning residents to evacuate, firing on residential areas, occupying houses as observation posts, exchanging fire with and conducting air strikes on Palestinian gunmen from helicopters and drones. Twelve Palestinian gunmen and 7 bystanders were killed and at least 2 gunmen and 29 bystanders were wounded in the raid, during which 2 smuggling tunnels near Qarni crossing were reportedly uncovered and demolished.

Operation Autumn Clouds, 11/1/06–11/8/06

Major ground and air attacks on northern Gaza (Bayt Hanun, Bayt Labiya, Jabaliya, and parts of Gaza City) in response to escalating Palestinian rocket fire. Eighty-two Palestinians and 1 IDF soldier were killed, 262 Palestinians and 3 IDF soldiers wounded, 250 dunams (62 acres) of land bulldozed, 150 homes destroyed or heavily damaged, total damages estimated to be \$23 m.

After a 10/12 Israeli assassination attempt on a senior Hamas commander in Gaza City, Hamas resumed rocket fire from Gaza, lightly injuring 4 Israelis over the next 2 weeks. In response, Israel on 11/1 launched a major raid into Gaza dubbed Operation Autumn Clouds, which superseded the open-ended Operation Summer Rains. In the weeklong operation, the IDF sent 100s of infantry soldiers, tanks, and helicopters into Bayt Hanun, Bayt Lahiya, Jabaliya r.c., and parts of Gaza City, sealing and imposing curfews on the areas, occupying homes as observation posts, rounding up all males ages 16–45, clashing with local gunmen, and conducting extensive leveling operations. Meanwhile, the IDF shelled extensively, made almost 240 airstrikes, and carried out at least 10 targeted assassinations. By the time the IDF withdrew on 11/8, 82 Palestinians had been killed (including 2 medics, 50 civilians, and at least 10 assassinated) and 262 wounded (including at least 58 women and 67 children). Material damages were estimated at \$23 m., including—in addition to the destroyed or damaged homes and the bulldozed agricultural land—a 12th-century mosque demolished and 3 mosques, several schools, and a hospital damaged. One IDF soldier was killed and 3 were wounded during ground clashes. Palestinians stepped up rocket fire during the incursion, wounding 8 Israelis inside Israel.

Unnamed Operation against Northern Gaza, 11/21/06–11/26/06

A seeming replay of Autumn Clouds, this air and ground campaign against northern Gaza (Bayt Hanun, Bayt Lahiya, Gaza City, and Jabaliya) was intended to suppress Palestinian rocket fire; 22 Palestinians killed, at least 67 wounded, 10 houses and 10 businesses destroyed, 80 dunams (20 acres) of land razed.

On 11/20, the IDF assassinated 2 senior Hamas members and made attempts on 2 others in Gaza, precipitating an increase in Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza into Israel that killed 1 Israeli on 11/21. In retaliation, the IDF the same day sent about 1,000 troops back into Bayt Hanun, Bayt Lahiya, Gaza City, and Jabaliya r.c., engaging in heavy clashes with local gunmen, searching homes for wanted Palestinians and munitions, and conducting air strikes on money exchanges connected to militant groups. During the operation, Hamas claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing (its first in 2 years) directed at troops in Bayt Lahiya that lightly injured 3 Israeli soldiers. As a result, the IDF intensified its ground operations and shelling of northern Gaza, and Palestinians escalated rocket fire.

The operation ended after PA President Abbas secured (11/25) through negotiations with Hamas and other factions a pledge for a 6-month truce if Israel reciprocated. Olmert accepted the unwritten deal on 11/25, and Palestinian factions in Gaza (except IJ) ceased firing on early on 11/26. The IDF withdrew completely from Gaza and ceased fire on Gaza by that evening.

[From 11/26/06 to 2/28/08—a full 15 months—no named Israeli military operations were launched, although Israel's siege of Gaza and routine military operations continued, including occasional air strikes, assassinations, bulldozing, and cross-border and naval fire. Another reason for the absence of formal operations during the period was Israel's shift in approach to joint coordination with the U.S. and the Ramallah PA to destabilize or unseat (via Fatah) the Hamas-led government in Gaza. Following Hamas's ouster of Fatah in June 2007, Israel tightened the economic siege of Gaza, stepped up cross-border attacks, and began planning a major incursion.]

Operation Hot Winter, 2/28/08–3/3/08

The largest ground incursion into Gaza since the 2005 disengagement, Operation Hot Winter, supported by intensive air strikes, targeted Gaza's "terrorist infrastructure" and focused on northern and central Gaza. The operation was seen by some experts as a trial run to gauge Palestinian resistance in anticipation of possibly retaking Gaza to unseat Hamas and halt rocket fire. One hundred and eleven Palestinians (half civilians) and 3 Israelis (1 civilian) were killed, more than 400 Palestinians wounded (mostly civilian), 80 Palestinians detained for questioning, 21 Palestinian homes destroyed and 88 heavily damaged, more than 750 Palestinians left homeless, 90 dunams (22 acres) of land bulldozed.

In response to escalating Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza into Israel that killed 1 Israeli and wounded 2 on 2/27 (marking the first fatality by rocket fire in 9 months and the 14th since Palestinians began to use rockets in 2001), Israel launched **Operation Hot Winter**, initially consisting of intensive air strikes (20 on the first day alone), mostly on northern and central Gaza, killing 20 Palestinians and wounding more than

50. Palestinians responded with 31 rockets and 15 mortars into Israel, injuring 2 Israelis. Exchanges on 2/29 left another 4 Palestinians dead, and 50. Palestinians and 1 Israeli wounded.

Overnight on 2/29–3/1, the IDF launched the largest ground incursion into Gaza since the 2005 disengagement, sending large numbers of infantry troops into northern Gaza, as far south as Gaza City. Supported by tanks, helicopters, and warplanes, IDF troops conducted house-to-house searches for weapons in the Jabaliya area, clashing with local gunmen; occupied homes as command posts; directed tank fire at residential and commercial areas; rounded up scores of Palestinians for questioning; and bulldozed electricity and telephone networks. Intensive air strikes across Gaza targeted a mosque, the home of a senior Hamas commander, numerous suspected weapons depots, and several police stations. On 3/1, at least 62 Palestinians were killed and 175 wounded, marking the deadliest single day since the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada. 2 IDF soldiers were also killed and 7 wounded in heavy fighting inside Gaza, while 6 Israelis were lightly injured by 24 rockets fired into Israel.

The severity of the offensive caused Abbas (under heavy pressure from the Palestinian factions) to suspend ongoing peace talks with Israel on 3/2; that same day, the UN Security Council called for an immediate cease-fire, and the EU denounced Israel's "disproportionate use of force" and "collective punishment." The U.S. refused to condemn Israel's operation, stating (3/1) that "there is a clear distinction between terrorist rocket attacks . . . and actions in self-defense."

Officially declaring a "pause" in operations for an upcoming visit by Secy. of State Condoleezza Rice on 3/4, Israel began to withdraw troops from Gaza around midnight on 3/2, removing all ground forces from Gaza early on 3/3. Some military analysts (see *New York Times* 3/6/08) suggested that Operation Hot Winter, particularly operations in Jabaliya, could be a test run for a broader ground incursion to practice how to take over a heavily populated, Hamas-controlled area and to get a sense of how much and what kind of resistance the IDF would face if it did attempt to retake Gaza. Likud MK Yuval Steinitz later acknowledged in an al-Jazeera interview on 1/4/09 that Israel began actively preparing for Operation Cast Lead around this date.