

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

SUICIDE BOMBERS—SOME
WERE MERELY CHILDREN

by

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ABSTRACT

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The recent introduction of suicide bombers into the American military's battle space is not new, remember the Japanese Kamikazes during World War II? These modern day bombers, however, have been operating primarily in the confines of the Israeli-Palestinian land until recently. In the year 2004, families in the Gaza Strip became highly alarmed when children as young as 11 were identified as potential bombers. These youngsters' elation and willingness to die perplexed many. The use of children, actually, is not new. Some African nations typically use child soldiers to fight their wars, Liberia is an example. This most brutal violence delivered with the elements of surprise, lethality, precision, and deception is created by mostly young adults of Arab descent. There is no notable feature; they are hard to detect, thereby, making everyone a potential target. This low cost, disposable human weapon, by far, is the most effective weapon against the technologically advanced militaries. There has been no method of deterrence identified to date. This paper will attempt to explore the root reason(s) of this barbaric weaponry. The root cause must be understood to begin working towards permanent eradication of suicide bombers. How are potential bombers targeted for recruitment? Do they really want to die? Are recruits merely vulnerable young people or are they coerced? Or are they driven by religious beliefs? Why are they considered martyrs? This project will examine these questions, attempt to establish a profile, and identify factors that motivate individuals to volunteer for suicide missions. The goal of this project is to propose possible solutions, if any, in deterring suicide bombers in the future.

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PREFACE

To use humans—suicide bombers to deliver death is despicable and tragic for the innocent bystander. What is more tragic is the use of children to carry out suicide missions for militant organizations as various groups have done in the Israeli-Palestinian land. While there does not seem to be a single solution to deter the suicide bomber, there could be one for the Israeli-Palestinian scenario. This solution is contingent on the participation of the neighboring countries and the international community. My hope is that a permanent solution is realized to the end of the suffering of both the Israeli and Palestinian people and so that their children will have a future to look forward to.

My appreciation for Dr. Doug Johnson's patience and keeping me focused. His encouragement to look at the Israeli-Palestinian background was extremely helpful in trying to understand this complex situation.

SUICIDE BOMBERS—SOME WERE MERELY CHILDREN

A powerful blast—the deadliest single attack on an American base was delivered on December 21, 2004 at Mosul Base in Iraq. Once again, we are reminded that one suicide bomber can bring massive, precise, and lethal destruction. This latest atrocity aimed at an American base killed 22 people. The count included 13 U.S. service members, six American civilians, and three Iraqi National Guard members.¹ There were many questions raised on how the attacker infiltrated the compound although high security measures were in effect—the base wrapped by blast walls, barbed wire fencing, and manned by U.S. troops who diligently check for identification and search of every person going in. Speculation is that the bomber probably had inside knowledge of the base's layout and the soldiers' schedule.² This attack was not the first time Americans were targeted. On April 4th 2003, a suicide car bomb attack against coalition forces was carried out by two women, killing three soldiers and wounding two civilians. A videotape subsequently aired by the Qatar-based Al Jazeera network featured the two women, holding the Quran and a machine gun and expressing their support for Saddam Hussein. Some reports indicate that one of the women was pregnant.³

AMERICAN MILITARY IN 2000 A.D.

Prior to March 20, 2003, American households were quasi immune to the reality of suicide bombers. Families tuned to their favorite evening news stations and heard about another suicide bomber on an Israeli bus—of course, that was on the other side of the world. It was an event that Americans only heard about and occasionally there were American tourists that became casualties. We went about our daily lives thinking that that these modern Kamikazes could not possibly touch us. Then our American military ventured into Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein; later, during the Phase IV (post-war operations), our world changed dramatically and rather surprising for most. Our original estimate of the situation was that the American liberators would be welcomed and that the country was going to be put under control easily. Instead we were confronted with terror worst than war itself, suicide bombers. Although we have read, heard, and seen destructions caused by explosives-strapped human delivery systems, our American military have not seen the cruel deceptions played by suicide bombers. Why would a pregnant woman lure soldiers to a taxi for help only to be detonated? The American military has not been exposed to this type of warfare since World War II when Japan used Kamikazes. How should the most technologically advanced military in the world deal with this crude and simple, but deadly human weapon?

BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL DATA OF SUICIDAL WARRIORS

Warfare involving suicide missions is actually not at all new. Throughout history, soldiers or combatants have used suicide attacks out of desperation, usually to prevent capture or to relieve a pinned-down unit. It was often carried out by detonating a grenade or other explosive device near enemy troops. Suicide missions appear to date back to the Crusades. The Knights Templar destroyed one of their own ships, killing 140 Christians in order to kill 10 times as many Muslims.⁴ During World War II, the American maritime force encountered suicide bombers in the Pacific. Japanese Air Force pilots were trained to fly explosives packed aircraft into enemy positions, usually against an American military carrier.⁵ After World War II, the French colonial Army experienced the Viet Minh death volunteers during their occupation of Vietnam.⁶

ORIGINATION OF THE PALESTINIAN SUICIDE MISSIONS

While this type of war is foreign to the American force, it is almost a weekly event for the Israeli military and has now bled into Russia. The Israeli problem with Palestinian suicide bombers seems to have originated on April 6, 1994.⁷ The first bombing committed against Israel was a retaliatory to a massacre committed on February 25, 1994 by a Jewish terrorist, Baruch Goldstein. Goldstein shot and killed 29 Palestinian worshippers during the holy month of Ramadan. Goldstein, a known anti-Arab extremist, was a Brooklyn-born Jewish physician who was a settler in Kiryat Arba.

Hamas initiated two strikes during that week in April 1994.⁸ The first was a car bomb that detonated near a bus in the Israeli town of Afula where eight Israelis were killed and 44 civilians injured. The second attack in Hadera killed five Israelis and injured 30. Hamas claimed responsibility and said that the attack was to avenge the massacre of 29 Palestinians in Hebron in February.

Today, it is not usual to hear or read as News Max Wire reported: "Suicide Bombers Kill 11 in Israeli Port" on March 15, 2004:

Ashdod, Israel -- Two Palestinian suicide bombers blew themselves up in closely guarded Israeli port Sunday, killing 11 Israelis in the first deadly attack on a strategic installation in more than three Years of Israeli-Palestinian fighting. Police said the bombers may have intended to blow themselves up near chemical tanks to try to cause far greater loss of life.

Since beginning of the Aqsa Intifada (September 2000), there has been 9 suicide bombers under the age of 18.⁹ 30 bombers who were caught by the IDF before they completed their missions are imprisoned in Israel. Dozen more are in support roles as spies, scouts, and

couriers. Suicide bombers inflicting destruction against Israeli citizens has, indeed, become a norm. In Nablus, West Bank during early 2004, a report that sparked horror:

...perhaps the youngest ever to try an armed attack against Israelis and they were ready to die. The arrest of three boys ages 12, 13 and 15, accused of trying to slip into Israel with homemade guns, sparked horror among their families and concern by Palestinian officials that militant groups have gone too far in their choice of recruits. "That's absolutely unacceptable," said Palestinian Cabinet Minister Saeb Erekat. "Our children should have hope and a future and should not be suicide bombers. We want them to be doctors and engineers.

How can the world stop this horrific act? More importantly, can these child bombers be deterred? It is very possible that a trend of parental outrage that was detected during this time was not acted upon and that could have made a difference. Parents of the children involved were outraged and denounced militant's use of suicide bombers. Such criticism of attacks on Israelis is rare among Palestinians, but in recent months more people have been condemning the recruiting methods.¹⁰ A cousin of Masri, a failed bomber, complained to a Palestinian reporter: "Those who sent him are godless. His brother and cousin were just killed. How can we have three dead in the family in one week?"¹¹ The parents of the failed bombers demanded an inquiry and faulted the militant Islamic Jihad for manipulating Masri's anger. They refused to celebrate his death as a shahid as parents of suicide bombers typically do.¹² The parents of Reem Salah al-Riyash, a 22-year old mother of two, were outraged at Hamas' recruitment of their daughter. They, too, refused to open their house for condolences, according to Palestinian journalists.¹³ Columnist Hassan al-Batal, PLO intellectual, wrote an article in the daily *Al-Ayyam* where he praised the families who spoke against sending loved ones to blow themselves up. His article was headlined "A Family's Revolt against the Culture of Death."¹⁴

The use of children as suicide bombers increased in 2004, after most suicide bombing attempts carried out by Palestinian men were thwarted by the Israeli Defense Force.¹⁴ During this early period of 2000, tighter security checks were implemented to cross borders and other checkpoints. These tighter measures began to impede Palestinian militant's missions against the State of Israel. The lack of freedom of movement soon prompted the Palestinian militant organizations to begin employing women and children to run errands and run suicide bomber missions. Women and children aroused less suspicion than men and the widely known modesty of women often resulted in incomplete security checks by Israel security personnel.

The first mission carried out by a child actually began in 1985 when 16 year old Khyadali Sana drove a truck laden with explosives into an Israeli Defense Force convoy, killing 2 soldiers.¹⁵ The May 19, 2003 suicide bomber, 19-year-old Hiba Da'arma, seems to have beckoned more female and child bombers. Hiba blew up at the entrance to a mall in Afulah,

killing 3 civilians and wounding 83, after being stopped by security guards. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) took responsibility for the attack, marking the first time the PIJ claimed responsibility for an attack conducted by a woman.¹⁶

THE CHILD BOMBERS ARE RESURRECTED

The 1985 event was reenacted in Nablus, West Bank by Sabih Abu Saud, a boy who had just turned 16 just 10 days earlier on November 2, 2003. When it was learned that he had strapped himself with explosives, a manhunt ensued. Sabih detonated the device when cornered by soldiers—fortunately inflicted only minor injury of an Israeli soldier. Sabih was unfortunately killed in the blast. It was reported that he was sent by the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, a group that has ties with Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.¹⁷ Sabih's father did not declare his son as a hero; instead he said the responsible group should have left his son alone—that he was only a "little boy."¹⁸ This was probably the first time that a Palestinian family publicly blamed the loss on the militant organizations.

The youngest suicide bomber, 14 year old Hussam Abdo, was caught during security checks at Hawara Checkpoint in the West Bank in March 2004.¹⁹ The Israeli Defense Force checkpoint personnel stopped Hussam after noticing the bulk under his sweater; security personnel then patiently walked him through removal of the explosives from his body. If Hussam had detonated the device, he could have killed the Israeli soldiers and 200-300 Arabs awaiting security checks. First, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for Hussam's heroic attempt to martyr himself, but when the media revealed that the bomber was a 14 year old child, Al Aqsa, then, denied they had sent him—claiming that the previous information was all a fabrication of Israeli propagandists.²⁰ This latest despicable use of children drew strong condemnation from human rights organizations and moderate Arabs, but failed to prevent further incidents of using children as suicide bombers.

PALESTINIAN APPROVED HUMAN BOMBS?

WHY PALESTINIAN CHILDREN ARE WILLING

The disturbing twist of exploiting children is the latest Palestinian militant groups' strategy to continue targeting, killing Israelis. They have focused their recruiting efforts on young Palestinians to carry out deadly missions. The puzzling part is that children and young adults are elated and willing to die. Shafiq Masalha, a clinical psychologist who teaches at Tel Aviv University's education program notes "I have studied the dreams of 300 Palestinian children from ages 10-12 and I would say that 15 percent of them dream of being suicide bombers."²¹

Why are they so attracted to violence and willing to deliver suicide missions? A reporter ask, "Who wants to be a martyr?" during 15-year old Ahmat Omar Abu Selmia's shahid celebration. "Me, me, me!" Dozens of fists shoot into the air. "I want to be like them! I want to blow myself up!"²² The 23-year old college student and son of local Hamas leader, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, said he, too, would be "honored to be chosen to become a martyr." His father was caught off guard and replied with a dismissive smile, "He doesn't know what he is saying. He is only saying this because of his youth. Some men must grow up to become doctors. But for that to happen, others have to sacrifice themselves and become martyrs."²³ A Hamas leader wants his son to have a future, but he is perfect willing for another Palestinian to give up his child. The real shocker is that Mr. Rantisi is a Palestinian militant organization leader and he is a parent that cares about his child—his son's future. What is it that attracts these young Palestinians?

There are four factors that attract both children and adults to suicide bombing. The primary answer seems to lie in the Palestinian government practice of sensationalizing to the young audience of becoming a martyr through the media, primarily television. A short film that has continued to be shown on television nearly twice a day since September 11 provides a chilling example of how the Palestinian Authority (OA) encourages children to engage in violent confrontation with Israeli and seek death.²⁴ Numerous other examples can be found on the Palestinian Media Watch. East Report reports:

At the beginning of the clip, a young Palestinian boy bids farewell to his father and his baby brother, telling them that he has decided to leave the family and seek "martyrdom." He then leaves the house and joins a group of other young Palestinian boys on their way to confront Israeli soldiers and attack them with stones. The scene changes to reveal the boy's friends delivering to his father a farewell note written by the boy. In the background, a vocalist sings the following lyrics: "Do not be sad my dear and do not cry over my parting—oh, my dear father, for my country—martyrdom. I shall sacrifice myself," according to a translation done by Palestinian Media Watch, an Israeli group that monitors the Palestinian media. As the father drops to his knees in grief the boy is shown dropping to the ground himself, slingshot in hand, after being shot by an Israeli soldier. As the boy's body slumps to the ground repeatedly in slow motion, his face serene, the vocalist sings, "I shall sacrifice myself. With determination and desire I long to approach. How sweet is the martyrdom when I embrace you, my land." The clip ends with a shot of the boy's mother crying, while the words sung in the background urge her to "be joyous over my blood and do not cry for me.

While the entire globe try is concerned and other nations try to untangle this problem to realize peace, the PA is continuing its open propaganda campaign to incite children to violence. PA does not appear to want to cultivate peace nor look for ways to exist together peacefully—instead of the preferred strategy of violence and death as an ideal.²⁵ The media is a very powerful tool; the terrorists understand it and use it to lure children to terrorist activities.

The second factor is the anger and helplessness that families and young people experience after Israeli military sweeps that kill family members or friends. This is the most vulnerable period and the militant organizations know exactly when to prey on these youngsters. During this grievous time of anger, suicide bombers are solicited by friends or other family members that have ties to these extremist groups. To put it in proper perspective, let us say that a teen lost his beloved cousin. In the background, the television is enticing the individual to get even. What is there to look forward to... when the situation is about endless hate, oppression, and violence? That same day, a good friend drops by to tell the individual to meet and talk to friends of his. This is a cycle that can not be broken unless Palestinian families find a better strategic answer for dealing with grieving teenagers.

Palestinian teenagers are not too different from American teens in terms of peer pressure. They are going through their difficult year just like American teenagers, both vulnerable and invincible. They are trying to find a spot in their world, to be accepted, and belong. Families wonder how their child became involved and the answer is very simple, the terrorist enticed the child the same way that American drug dealers promised children a "feeling good" escape from reality. In one report a father said he knew nothing of his son's political affiliation. He was probably lured during a weak moment.

The family is also not at all different from American families. Imagine an image of a family trying to survive in the heart of a bad neighborhood in any large American city. If the parents do not know what their child is doing during his spare time, the probability is that they will lose the children to any number of social malady—prostitution, crime, drugs, or gang activities. Rather than allowing children to throw stones and harass the Israeli military, parents need to look for other solutions to keeping their children off the streets. When violence erupts and is shown live on television, with children throwing stones, it makes one wonder if the parents know where their children are.

Is religion a factor? Palestinian children are influenced by religion only to a degree, but religion alone is not a powerful enough factor. The Quran, selectively interpreted by the extremist groups, validates and seals the distributed information, through the media and sometimes school classrooms. Naim Ateek says "The suicide bombings become a more powerful phenomenon when the religious underpinnings are emphasized."²⁶ Does the Quran really promise a land of honey and 72 virgins for male suicide bombers? It makes one wonder what heavenly promise lured the female suicide bombers to perform a suicide mission. The Palestinian religious factor resembles how American extremist groups cite various passages from the Christian Bible—their selected and twisted interpretation of the Bible. As the terrorist

continually transform their organizational structure, the carefully devised profiles used to target recruits specifically tied to missions, the art of seduction through the media, and the fear and intimidation embedded in the Palestinian population sanctified with religious rhetoric is the strategy used to lure teenagers. The militant groups exploit highly susceptible young people, using them as disposable weapons.

DOES A PROFILE OF A CHILD BOMBER EXIST?

Numerous attempts have been made to establish a psychological framework—a profile of a terrorist. To date, there has not been one concrete profile that has stood the test of time. The motivation on why an individual becomes a terrorist seems to be the only long-standing feature of a terrorist.²⁷ Typically, the rational person is the leader, businessman, and the thinker such as Osama Bin Laden.²⁸ Terrorists with psychological motivation are usually dissatisfied with life, some are orphans, social outcasts, or criminals that, once become member, dedicate his life to terrorism, and transform into a passionate believer.²⁹ This individual has a strong desire to belong—his associates become his family. American terrorist Timothy McVae may fit best in this category. Terrorists with cultural motivations perceive others as “outsides” and anticipate a threat to ethnic group’s survival. The perceived threats are to the group’s values and way of life.³⁰ The Palestinian children most likely fit into the psychological category because of their vulnerability and hopeless situation that surround them.

The child bombers, like the adult, have varying backgrounds. Previous to the surge of young female suicide bombers, data showed that 47% of the male suicide bombers had primary academic education in Islamic institutions, 29% had high school education, 83% were unmarried, 64% are young males between the age of 18 and 23, the majority were from poor families plagued by unemployment, the majority were devout Muslims, and all were linked to a close friend or family killed by the Israeli Army.³¹ During early 2000, the profile shifted and now includes females and very young males under the age of 18. Previous reports that said that suicide bombers were deluded, evil, homicidal misfits, or ignorant are no longer true.³² An important and common element among them is that they all believe that they will be forgiven by Allah and will be rewarded for their cause. This may or may not be linked to the Islamic institution they attended during their primary schooling years. Or it could be that seal of religious approval that the militant group sold to the recruit.

Further, devout Muslim youngsters are carefully studied before being selected for missions. The chosen, then, undergoes preparation to carry out a mission.³³ Doctor Boaz Ganor, executive director of the International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism in Herzliya,

Israel states that the socially deprived recruits are showered with lucrative rewards and told that their act will upgrade the family's status. The family of the recruit is consistently honored, praised and rewarded with money.³⁴

How important is it to establish a profile? What will we do with the profile? According to Dr. Marcman Sageman, University of Pennsylvania, the profile is changing significantly every four to five years.³⁵ Dr. Sageman advised against the danger of placing faith in profiling and screening. The profiling at the different checkpoints is only a tactical solution that humiliates and further angers Palestinians. Neither the Israelis, nor the Palestinians who are law abiding citizens, can control their environment due to militant and military clashes. For example, the Israelis shut down colleges, making the many suffer for the deeds of the few. As a result, constant disruption of college life turns the completion of a 4-year college degree program into an eight year program.

The child bombers like the adult bombers have varying backgrounds. They are not all impoverished or lack education as previously thought. The underlying reason seems to be the hopelessness of ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian people, the oppression—the humiliating, dehumanization of the Palestinian people. Given the underlying reason, the militant organizations have carefully devise recruiting strategies over the years—a continuing transformation effort.

THE TRANSFORMED STRATEGIST

Today's terrorist is viewed as Osama Bin Laden riding a mule and living in primitive surrounding somewhere in the mid-east. The truth is that the terrorist organizations have carefully studied the American military and the populace—in essence, defined our centers of gravity with accuracy. Using what they already know how to do best and recruiting the young and educated, they, too, have transformed. They now better understand new technology and know how to exploit it as a tool and as methods of attack.³⁶

The modern transformed terrorist operates in cyberspace using digitized tools including computer, voice, fax, telex, digital operated transportation systems, digital control systems, digital operated appliances, high tech weapon systems, and a wide-array of communication technologies such as switching systems, broadcasting, satellite systems—to name only a few.³⁷

The militant organizations have organized themselves in a sophisticated manner with cells all over the world and these organizations details are situation specific.³⁸ They also understand the motivation of their members and recruited accordingly. The “throw away” is the vulnerable teen that was just recruited to run a suicide mission.³⁹ The time invested to train terrorists

depends on their value in the organization. It is almost with certainty that the teen bomber is not trained for months or even weeks to run a suicide bombing mission.

It appears that their transformation includes methods used to find recruits—in the case of suicide bombers. The target recruits are women and now children because the IDF typically did not do elaborate searches of women and children before. The media that beckons an oppressed and angry people, luring a grieving teen who is already in the midst of his vulnerable years, and steered with some religious rhetoric is the terrorist formula for targeting the young disposable weapons. How do we find a solution to this despicable exploitation of children?

Over the years, terrorists have refined their weapons from rudimentary and traditional methods like hostage taking and assassinations to ecological terrorism to high-tech terrorism.⁴⁰ The United States was dozing as flying lessons were being provided to those who were going to attack the World Trade Center by commercial airplanes. Terrorists understand targeting and centers of gravity. Terrorists today are highly skilled in gathering intelligence and are detailed planners. They know how to move about with the appearance of legitimacy with forged documents.⁴¹ Today's terror organizations have structured support all over the world, using sympathizers—active, passive, sleepers, and those coerced into helping with finances, logistical, intelligence, propaganda, or recruiting.⁴² The financial means is comprised of donations, drug/criminal-generated income, and states that support terrorism. Their communications and control system linkages are difficult break; cell leaders are known to operate independently. As the western world advances in technological systems, terrorists are ahead of government agencies in embracing systems for their own purpose while the government agencies are in a mostly reactive mode.⁴³ While there are no takers in challengers to a force on force against the United States military power, there are a few non-state and rogue-states that challenge Americans asymmetrically, especially through the use of suicide bombing missions. The September 11, 2001 well-synchronized attack on the United States was carried out with transformed terrorists—using high-tech knowledge to bring war to the American soil.

DETERRING THE BOMBER

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN NEIGHBORS

The interrogation and humiliating searches for bombs at the Israeli checkpoints is not the answer. These methods are merely tactical solutions and are causing only more outrage. How shall a strategic approach be made? Who must make the first move towards a solution? Who

will bring the newly elected Palestinian leader and the Israeli prime minister to the table? What role will the Palestinian Authority play? What about the parental role?

The resolution is not only between Israelis and the Palestinians. There is a party of countries and it includes the United States—the U.S. has the most influence on Israel. The strong ties include loans, military resources, diplomatic ties, and strong influence on the American government through the American Jewish communities. The Americans, perhaps, have too strong ties to Israel, but they are in a position to influence.

The surrounding countries that have the most at stake are Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia—and possibly Turkey. Lebanon, having been occupied by Israel at one time, with adjoining countries, and the Golan Heights next door has much at stake and that concerns Turkey. Any instability in Lebanon is too close for Turkey to ignore. "...the good relations and strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel are likely to continue. Ankara and Jerusalem still share a common prism on international relations, in general, and on the Middle East, in particular. Both nations see themselves as living in a violent and unstable Middle East, maintaining an adversary relationship with Syria, and having growing concerns about the security risks emanating from Iraq and Iran, particularly in relation to weapons of mass destruction."⁴⁴ In December 2002, Turkey accepted high-level and well-publicized visits from Israeli leaders that included Yoav Biran, the Acting Director General of the Foreign Ministry, and Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, the IDF Chief of Staff. Moreover, in January 2003, two Turkish frigates participated in a joint U.S.-Turkey-Israel search and rescue naval exercise in the eastern Mediterranean."⁴⁵ Turkey could be a viable player in any peace initiatives in the future.

Syria, an openly unfriendly neighbor next door and current occupier of Lebanon, tends toward status quo. But with Syria's participation, any agreement could be stalled. It is presumed that "Syria will not agree to any territorial compromises on the Golan Heights and would refuse to endorse any separate deal between Israel and Lebanon."⁴⁶ If Syria cannot be coaxed into the negotiations, there are other pressures that can be brought about through the Arab organizations or trade partners/organizations. If Syria is absolutely unbending, the peace talks may have to be maneuvered around the Golan Heights.

Saudi Arabia, although not a close neighbor, a large nation with much influence on other Arab nations does not seem interested in more favorable ties. While there seems to be a desire for a just solution for the Palestinians, there is no sincere gesture to indicate that Saudi Arabia wants any part of the solution. Instead there is a tendency to blame the United States for its policy regarding Israel. Khaled Al Maeena, editor-in-chief of the Jeddah-based daily Arab News, told Daily Times that the "Arab and Islamic world must force messages forcefully and

meaningfully to the gullible and ignorant US population” to change the perception of Islam.⁴⁷ He stated:

We ought to set up a TV channel to rival CNN and drive home our message forcefully and meaningfully to the gullible and ignorant U.S. population”. He criticized what he called a “lop-sided” US foreign policy that offered blind support to Israel while ignoring the rights of the Palestinians for a separate homeland. “There won’t be peace in the region unless the lingering Palestinian issue is resolved justly and judiciously. Occupation and repression would only breed more suicide bombers.⁴⁸

Mr. Maeena recalled a question once on why “Palestinians indulged in suicide bombings. His answer, he said, had been simple: “If the Palestinians were given Apache helicopters and M-16 assault rifles, they would fight on an equal and level-playing field.”⁴⁹ The editor obviously does not realize that suicide bombers are disposable weaponry that the militants use for the Palestinian cause. Mr. Maeena seems to think that the militant organizations are the groups that are distorting the Muslim world. Given the Saudis one-sided view, they are probably not likely to be in the forefront of the resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

This leaves us with the only two countries that have diplomatic ties, Jordan and Egypt. Could the recent prisoners exchange be a positive signal of warming relations? On December 5, 2004, Egypt returned an Israeli Arab charged with spying for Israel after seven years in prison. Simultaneously, Israel released six Egyptian students charged with trying to abduct and kill Israeli soldiers.⁵⁰

The most important ties are between Jordan and Israel. On October 26, 2004 marked a decade since the signing of the peace agreement between the two countries.⁵¹ Another significant milestone was reached in May 2004; a new trade agreement was signed between the two countries. They also have a water agreement and exchange of tourism and cultural and scientific ties.⁵² Strategically, Jordan is in a very likely position to assist Egypt with any peace initiative.

With Egypt and Jordan leading the way, Turkey and Lebanon could be influenced in this small circle of Israel’s neighbors to come to the peace table. Syria may be influenced, if the Golan Heights is negotiated on acceptable terms between the trio (Israel, Lebanon, and Syria). Coming to the peace table is not the sole solution. Parallel to the international peace initiative, the Palestinian Authority must play the most important role in teaching--reprogramming the Palestinian people the way to peace.

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL SOLUTION OF DETERRENCE

The time is very ripe for the international community and Arab nations to strongly condemn the use of children to deliver bombs at public places to kill innocent civilians. Condemnation must come from the highest of Arab officials. Some Palestinian parents and officials have spoken against this sinister practice, but Arab nations that belong to the Arab League and the League of Arab States must reinforce it. Parents must band together and pressure the Palestinian Authority to stop advocating violence. PA must make it illegal to solicit children for suicide bombings.

The first step in ending this atrocity must begin with the Palestinian Authority. The media has been used to lure suicide bombers and that same tool should be used to re-modify the children's vulnerable minds. They are taught to hate and kill Israelis. They are programmed in summer camps that it is a calling to be a suicide bomber—to become a martyr for the Palestinian cause. Suicide bomber campaigns are on Palestinian television. All of this must be reversed and actively campaigned against by Palestinians themselves.

A national program to eradicate the use of children in suicide missions must be stood up to educate parents that this is not a method to show the destitute situation that the Palestinian people are suffering. On the other hand, they Palestinian people must also learn that Israelis are people who suffer as well. The heavy burden of ensuring that children are not recruited by militant groups to wage violence must be made parental responsibility. Although it is true that parents never have total control of a child when he or she reaches a certain age, incentives such as jobs, college tuition, training programs could be used to get teenagers off the streets. Other incentives could be deployed for the younger children. This would also serve as a tool to give parents and their children hope. Young children must be closely monitored at school as well as at home.

Mothers are the front line defenders dissuading the children's attraction to the delicious-sounding traps of death. There is a natural bond that takes place between mother and child right after birth. That bond to hold, feed, care, and protect the child is something that most mothers share.⁵³ That, in most cases, is an eternal bond. We have seen Palestinian parents praising their dead children for becoming a martyr, but there also another side to the public face. The story of the 27-year old apprentice lawyer, Hanadi Jaradat, is much like most. Her 23 year old brother was killed by the Israelis during crackdown of alleged Islamic Jihad activities.⁵⁴ The story of hopelessness is the same—the father lost his painting job when the Israelis closed the borders. The family “gave almost programmatic, suppressed like statements” when interviewed on Hanadi's death.⁵⁵ The father interjected “I don't want to talk about my feelings, my pain, my

suffering.¹⁵⁶ Yes, despite the public statement of pride, there is also the pain as Mr. Jaradat stated. Another example is the outrage that was voiced when three boys aged 12, 13, and 15 were arrested in Nablus, West Bank during early 2004 for slipping into Israel with homemade guns.

With the recent knowledge that it is painful for Palestinian families to lose a child, training programs to prevent loss of young lives should be developed—geared to the parents, to the mothers primarily. In the past, the parents' way of dealing with their loss was by placing the blame on the Israelis rather than the parasite militant groups that recruited the child. Does this have any correlation to the curtailment of cash bonuses to the bomber's family before? Or are the Palestinians tired of losing their children?

Demolishing the suicide bomber's family home must be stopped. It simply adds hopelessness and hate to people already in pain. It is apparent that most families did not know about the bomber's affiliation with any extremist groups. This is like demolishing an American murderer's family home after an arrest. The findings—determination of the family's tie to any militant group are not even established. How is it supposed to deter future bombers? Is it working?

There must be an information operation deployed to report the Palestinian progress and discourage, internationally, giving prime-time or front-page news to terrorist activities. Part of this operation should be to let the Palestinian Authority's information experts tell the story of who is actually trying to destabilize—disrupt this new way of life. The idea is to obliterate the Palestine Liberation Organization-like organizations. There will be periodic activity, but like the Irish Republican Army, little of the militant activity could be nightly news in a few years.

A viable political system must be legitimized. The type of political system should be the Palestinian people's choice with the surrounding countries' endorsement. The League of Arab States with the help of other subsidiary bodies of the Arab League must play the most critical role of building a stable and economically viable Palestinian state. Although the United States played a role in the initiation of the peace talks, they must support, but not directly enter into the nation building process.

Israelis must also undergo the same indoctrination. Beginning with the prime minister, there must be programs that publicize the roadmap. The military will play a significant role in the peace process. In the beginning, there will naturally be much distrust and it will be very difficult for the Israelis to disarm. They may not ever disarm; after all, they are surrounded by 22 very hostile nations and fighting for their very survival. Perhaps those IDF checkpoints will

never be eliminated, but the nature, severity, and frequency of checks could be reduced as trust is built up—trust built upon performance.

THE OVERARCHING STRATEGIC PROBLEM--CHILD SOLDIERS

The Palestinian militants' exploitation of children is a problem, but it seems to be a subordinate problem to the strategic issue of using children as combatants. The use of children for military purposes is not new; we have all heard stories about juveniles that lied about their age to enlist in previous American conflicts. And there was Hitler's notorious use of juveniles prior to the end of World War II.⁵⁷

More recently, there has been an increase in the use of children. As many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 are reportedly serving as combatants in the world's armed organizations.⁵⁸ Yet, the use of young, people under the age of 18 seems to be growing. Reportedly as many as 500,000 have been recruited and serve in 40 percent of the world's armed forces; and they serve in 75 percent of the world's conflicts.⁵⁹ Studies show that about 30 percent of the 500,000 are girls. Of 55 countries that have used young girls in their armed forces, 27 have exposed them to combat.

The American armed forces have witnessed children in combat in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq. The first casualty in the war on terrorism was Sergeant Nathan Chapman. The media reported that the sniper that killed him was a 14-year old Afghan boy.⁶⁰ On August 9, 2004, a 12-year old boy was captured after being wounded during a Taliban ambush of a convoy. U.S. forces in Iraq have encountered child soldiers in Nasariyah, Mosul, and Karbala.⁶¹ Further, a report by UK Daily Telegraph in April 2003 revealed that children were being used as human shields.⁶² When observers noted child soldiers in Iraq serving in radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, spokesman Sheikh Ahmad al-Shebani defended the action saying "This shows that the Mahdi are a popular resistance movement against occupiers. The old men and the young men are on the same field of battle."⁶³ Children were seen in the Sunni Triangle as well as during the retake of Fallujah in November 2004.

The future problem of child soldiers could have a devastating effect on future citizens of those countries. The use of children in combat could produce psychologically impaired and morally troubled societies.⁶⁴ What type of societies will these troubled child combatants create in the future? Liberia is an example where a whole generation of children are now plague by recurring violence.⁶⁵ These same children have been found fighting in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and in Democratic Republic of Congo causing regional instability.⁶⁶

It is likely that the idea to use children to deliver bombs evolved from troubled areas such as Africa, Thailand, and some South American countries. Despite the recent international discussion and agreements regarding the use of children as combatants, there is less influence on the non-state actor. The child bomber can be deterred only if the PA and the Palestinian people begin pursuing change.

CONCLUSION

The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma greatly depends on the primary players getting Israel and the Palestinian leader to the negotiating table. Which countries have the greatest influence on each? For Israel, it must be the United States. For Palestine, it should be an influential Arab neighbor, such as Egypt or Jordan, to continue to stimulate the new Palestinian leader. Recent efforts made by Egypt and Jordan in preparing and organizing a four-way summit in Egypt. The new Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed to cease fire and stop over four years of violence. Leaders such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah II are without a doubt guiding this course.⁶⁷ International leaders, members of the international quartet on the Middle East peace process, must encourage diligently direct this fragile situation in the right direction. Without this effort, there is great risk to re-igniting violence again. This is the first step and the only solution that will that will permanently lead to an established state for the Palestinian people.

According to Ghassan Khatib, minister of labor in the Palestinian Authority cabinet, there are more significant considerations to this latest progress.⁶⁸

The summit created a situation in which a period of calm and the undeclared ceasefire might be sustained and be developed into a peace process replacing military confrontations with political negotiations. But the lack of substance at the summit and the fragile security situation are both problematic factors. Should the calm be violated, it could undermine the new Palestinian leadership in a way that might bring back the violence with even greater force.

Khatib noticed the change of world attitude and that the U.S must be engaged in the roadmap for peace. He suggested linking the security progress and the calm with a political process. He states that it will be difficult for Palestinians to stand by and watch calmly as the peaceful Israeli acquisition of Palestinian territory continues apace with the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements and the walls that are constructed inside Palestinian territories. Mr. Khatib advised to undertake quick measures to alleviate Palestinian poverty, reduce unemployment, and allow for an economic recovery. This way the Palestinian people will feel they have a real stake in the new situation.⁶⁹

It appears that Mr. Khatib's proposal is a call for nation building. Rule of law already exist for each and there is reasonable security, although it may be very fragile. To jumpstart the economy, as suggested earlier, Arab nations must step in and begin building this new nation. There is that danger that if the borders are not agreed to mutually, violence may begin again. To keep the process alive, the influential parties must ensure there is a fair solution to both parties. As in any settlement, there will be dissatisfied settlers on both sides, but there are ways to compensate these parties for the betterment of the masses.

Lastly, militant groups will always exist and how disruptive they are is a matter for the larger society to deal with. Responsible governments, parents, and other adults that have influence over children must teach them how to deal with extremist groups. That is the true solution to this problem. It may seem too simplistic, but this problem is very similar to the American struggle of keep children away from illegal drugs and other social disorders. Drug use will always exist as long as demand keeps it a profitable business. There are probably well stratified ways that illegal American drug dealers have devised to keep supply flowing to new markets like the terrorists groups. Potential drug customers are like the suicide bombers; drug kings are like militant heads who lure and take advantage of teens; the unsuspecting Palestinian parents can be related to busy or uncaring American parents who allow their children unlimited freedom where children are sometimes lost forever to illegal activities; then imagine, an irresponsible government that allow programs that promote violence against the Israelis... that could be equated to the American government's promotion of illegal drugs or child pornographic activities to ensnare vulnerable children. Yes, the Palestinian Authority must intervene and promote a healthier way to approach this Israeli-Palestinian issue, if they want a future for their children.

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