**The IDF’s Mission in Gaza: Destroy Hamas Terror Tunnels**

IDF Blog

July 17, 2014

[http://web.archive.org/web/20140802094624/http://www.idfblog.com/blog/2014/07/17/idf-begins-ground-operation-gaza/](http://web.archive.org/web/20140802094624/http%3A//www.idfblog.com/blog/2014/07/17/idf-begins-ground-operation-gaza/)

Following ten days of Hamas attacks against Israel by land, air, and sea – and after repeated rejections of offers to deescalate the situation – the Israel Defense Forces has started a new phase of Operation Protective Edge. A large IDF force of infantry, tanks, artillery, combat engineers, and field intelligence is entering the Gaza Strip.The force is supported by the Israel Air Force, Navy, and other Israeli security agencies.

Their mission is to target Hamas’ tunnels that cross under the Israel-Gaza border and enable terrorists to infiltrate Israel and carry out attacks.

Such a goal requires intensive and precise operations inside Gaza. Hamas terrorists are operating underground, and that is where the IDF will meet them. The IDF intends to impair Hamas’ capability to attack Israel.

Hamas fires rockets at Israelis around the clock – 1,500 since July 8. The IDF is operating in order to counter this threat.

**The Tunnel Threat**

Earlier today, July 17, the IDF identified around 13 Palestinians who had infiltrated Israel through a tunnel dug from Gaza. The tunnel began in the southern Gaza Strip and its exit was near Kibbutz Sufa in Israel. The terrorists were [heavily armed](http://web.archive.org/web/20140802094624/http%3A/youtu.be/xjkwIMRZI8o) with RPGs and assault rifles and were prepared to carry out a massacre. The IDF [foiled their attack](http://web.archive.org/web/20140802094624/http%3A/youtu.be/SM6WUoel7xk), saving countless Israeli lives.

[EMBEDDED VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/SM6WUoel7xk?list=UUawNWlihdgaycQpO3zi-jYg>]

The tunnel uncovered this morning was one of many such tunnels that the IDF has discovered in recent years. In 2013, for example, the IDF [uncovered a tunnel](http://web.archive.org/web/20140802094624/https%3A/www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4-WlTG20Bo) from Gaza to Israel that was 18 meters (59 feet) underground and extended for 1.7 km (1 mi). The tunnel was built with 500 tons of concrete and cement.

Hamas used a similar tunnel in 2006 in order to infiltrate Israel, kill two IDF soldiers, and kidnap Gilad Shalit. Hamas has repeatedly said that it wants to kidnap more Israelis in similar attacks.

Hamas has invested millions of dollars and other resources in order to operate its thriving tunnel network. There is evidence that construction materials that Israel transferred to Gaza for civilian projects has been used by Hamas for its tunnels.

An Intolerable Reality

Hamas has sworn itself to endless war against Israel. Its suicide bombers have targeted buses, schools, restaurants, malls, and more. Its rocket launching squads have fired more than thousands of rockets in the past decade, making life intolerable not only for Israeli communities near the Gaza border, but also in major cities including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Beersheba, Ashdod, and Ashkelon.

The Israel Defense Forces will operate wherever necessary in order to protect the people of Israel.

