

The Road to Protective Edge: Israel-Hamas Confrontation in Gaza

[Maj. Gen. \(Res.\) Sami Turjeman, IDF](#)

February 2018

Operation Protective Edge, the IDF's summer 2014 campaign in the Gaza Strip, marked the most violent recent conflict between the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas, the Islamist group that has administered the Palestinian coastal territory since 2007. The campaign also saw many tactical innovations on both sides, such as expanded tunnel use by Hamas and the successful employment of the Iron Dome missile-defense system by Israel. Yet, contrary to some assumptions, the battle did not actually signal a strategic change from the status quo: although Israel triumphed, as attested by the quiet border in the years since, Hamas continues to deny Israel's legitimacy and to prepare for a future clash.

In this Policy Note, Maj. Gen. (Res.) Sami Turjeman, the Israeli commander of Protective Edge, draws on close personal experience to recount the history of Israel-Hamas hostilities. He argues that Israel alone can prevent a future flare-up, in part because Palestinian politics stands at an impasse. Appropriate Israeli action must entail creation of a new military concept—and a military restructuring—to counter the concept Hamas is developing. Absent such action, he contends, the two sides will likely face a future conflict even bloodier than the last, yet just as inconclusive.

THE AUTHOR

Shlomo “Sami” Turjeman, a 2017–18 visiting military fellow at The Washington Institute, is a major general in the Israel Defense Forces reserves, where he has completed 34 years of service at the operational-command core. During the second Lebanon War he was head of the Operations Brigade in the Operations Directorate; since that time, he has served variously as commander of the 36th Armored Division in the Northern Command, commanding officer of IDF Army Headquarters, and chief of IDF Southern Command during Operation Protective Edge. He earned a BA in political science from Bar-Ilan University and an MBA from Tel Aviv University.