

Will killing civilians cause Hamas to change its 'tunnel strategy'?

MAHMOOD HASAN

ONE of the reasons why Hamas has been able to continue its fight with the Israelis is because of the military strategy employed by Qassam Brigade, the military wing of Hamas. To resist the overwhelmingly powerful Israeli military, Qassam cleverly chose not to go for face-to-face combat. It had opted for guerrilla warfare. But the fight is not above ground but underground – through tunnels. That's what giving Netanyahu nightmares.

Tunnel warfare is not new. How to attack a well-defended enemy has always bothered battle commanders. It has been there in siege warfare for the past two thousand years, if not more. Digging tunnels under the walls of fortress to gain access to the defenders was the strategy used by opposing forces in many battles in the early ages. In the Middle Ages, defender of a castle under siege would put out a bowl of water. If there were ripples in the bowl it meant that the enemy was picking away at the ground underneath them.

Digging tunnels underground is dangerous and requires skill. The danger is that the tunnel may collapse and kill the digger. Both during World War I and World War II lots of tunnels were dug in the battle field. In 1943 British Prisoners of War (POWs) held in, German prisoner-of-war camp Stalag Luft III, dug a long tunnel to escape. Based on true accounts "The Great Escape" directed by John Sturges became an epic movie.

The effectiveness "Cù Chi" tunnels of Vietnam are well known. The vast networks of these tunnels were the

base of the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive of 1968. Viet Cong soldiers used the tunnels as hiding spots, supply routes, food and weapon caches, hospitals and living quarters. When the American discovered the tunnels they mounted several operations to destroy them, but failed. Sending down specially trained soldiers, known as "tunnel rats" into the tunnels was hazardous. Ultimately, the Viet Cong prevailed and the Americans had to quit Vietnam in haste.

To circumvent the effects of economic blockade by Israel, Hamas has been using tunnels for many years to smuggle goods and wares mainly across the Rafah border with Egypt. Egypt had closed many of these tunnels but soon new ones came up, which were used by Hamas to smuggle arms and ammunition.

Hamas also dug tunnels across the Gaza-Israel border gaining access into Southern Israel. Hamas has developed the skill to make a network of concrete tunnels with proper air supply. These underground complexes are similar in concept to the Viet Cong tunnels. It is estimated that more than a million dollars were spent to construct some of these tunnels.

The tunnels are interconnected with several camouflaged exits and entrances. Hamas fighters use them to mount surprise attacks on Israeli soldiers and disappear underground. The tunnels are booby trapped with explosives. It is hard to detect these tunnels, as most of the entrances are located under the bottom floor of buildings. And Gaza is a heavily built area.

These tunnels are used by Hamas to store and deploy weapons, hide Hamas fighters. Ihab al-Ghoussein, spokes-

man for Hamas Interior Ministry described the tunnels as an exercise of Gaza's "right to protect itself". Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh described the tunnels "a new strategy in confronting the occupation and in the conflict with the enemy from underground and from above the ground". Yahya al-Sinwar, Hamas political bureau member, said that the tunnels have shifted the advantage in favor of the Palestinians. "Today we are the ones who invade the Israelis", he said. "They do not invade us".

In 2006, in a surprise attack a Qassam assault group emerged behind Israeli border post, killed two soldiers and abducted Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier. Gilad was later exchanged in 2011 for the release of 1027 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

In the ongoing war, two squads of Hamas fighters crossed into Israel through a tunnel on 21 July. The first squad of ten fighters was killed by Israeli air strike. The second squad killed four Israeli soldiers. Again on 28 July Qassam fighters using a tunnel killed five Israeli soldiers near Nahal Oz. On August 1, Hamas fighters attacked an Israeli patrol and killed three soldiers, including Hadar Goldin. Goldin was believed to be abducted by Hamas.

Tunnel warfare is a dangerous military tactics, which relies on surprising the enemy. Hamas has been able to pose serious threats to the powerful Israeli military machine. It has helped to boost the moral of Hamas fighters and continue to fight on. In certain ways it has shifted the balance of power in favor of Hamas.

Israel refers to these tunnels as "terror tunnel", which is used for cross-border attacks on IDF and Israeli civilians. Israel has so far located 23 tunnels with 66 access points. These tunnels are giving the IDF peculiar horror. Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that Israel will continue to bomb Gaza until these tunnels are destroyed and Gaza is demilitarized. The problem is aerial bombing may not be effective in destroying these concrete underground structures. Even if the entrance of a tunnel is blown off the remaining part stays intact -- to be used by the fighters by digging an alternative entrance.

In order to destroy the entire network, Israeli soldiers will have to go into Gaza physically and start a house-to-house search, locate the tunnels and destroy them. Going into Gaza would mean reoccupying Gaza -- an option on which Israel is not too keen. Though Israel has "Yahalom", specially trained soldiers, to go down and destroy tunnels, the casualty figures will rise dramatically. As of August 3, 2014 Israel has lost 66 soldiers. Israel has not forgotten the 2006 war in Southern Lebanon, when it suffered serious losses (121 killed) caused by tunnel warfare strategy of Hezbollah.

By indiscriminate bombing Israel may be able to defeat Hamas, but it cannot kill the resolve of the Palestinians to resist and eventually get back their homeland. For now Hamas is well entrenched in their concrete tunnels. It is an exasperating no-win situation for Israel.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

Hiroshima and Nuclear Weapons Disarmament

BOTTOM LINE



BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

AUGUST 6th reminds us the horrors of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons. The annual 6th August Peace Memorial Ceremony, which is sponsored by the city of Hiroshima, is held in the park every year. The location of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was once the city's busiest downtown commercial and residential district. The park has been built on an open field that was created by the explosion.

Hiroshima Memorial Park is dedicated to the legacy of Hiroshima as the first city in the world to suffer a nuclear attack, and to the memories of the bomb's direct and indirect victims of whom there may have been as many as 140,000. The purpose of the Peace Memorial Park is to not only in memory of the victims, but also to establish the memory of nuclear horrors and advocate world peace and nuclear disarmament. Today there are a number of memorials and monuments, museums, and lecture halls, which draw over a million visitors annually.

It may be recalled at 2:45 a.m. on Monday, August 6, 1945, a B-29 bomber, the Enola Gay, took off from Tinian, a North Pacific island in the Marianas, 1,500 miles south of Japan. Colonel Paul Tibbets, the pilot, nicknamed the B-29 the "Enola Gay" after his mother. On a hook in the ceiling of the plane, hung the ten-ton atomic bomb, "Little Boy." Navy Captain William S. Parsons, released the bomb on Hiroshima, which flattened the city, killing tens of thousands of civilians. While Japan was still trying to comprehend this devastation three days later, the United States struck again, this time, on Nagasaki on August 9th.

Nuclear weapons pose an intolerable threat to all humanity and its habitat. The destructiveness of nuclear weapons is immense. Any use of weapons would be catastrophic. The only defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of countries which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them.

The Arms Control Association (ACA), a US weapons research organization estimates the number of strategic atomic warheads held by the US to be about 6000, Russia, 5000, France 350, China 300, and UK 180. ACA estimates Israel 200, Pakistan 110 and India 95.

According to a report in January, 2009, the US has now 1,198 land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-based missiles, and bombers which together are capable of delivering 5,676 warheads. The US now deploys at least 2,200 strategic nuclear warheads. Russia has 816 delivery vehicles capable of delivering 3,909 warheads. While the number of deployed Russian strategic warheads is not known, the Arms Control Association estimates it at 2,000 to 3,000.

The world faces threats of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism. These threats are growing. Western security chiefs told a Nato meeting in 2009 that Al-Qaeda was planning a programme of "dirty radioactive improved explosive devices" which could be used against soldiers fighting in Afghanistan that would contaminate the surrounding area for years to come. Furthermore Al Qaeda papers found in 2007 convinced security officials that greater advances had been made in bio-terrorism than previously feared.

There have been attempts by rogue organisations to smuggle weapons grade material and in one case a freight train on the Kazakhstan-Russia border had carried weapons-grade material while a small dealer in Lisbon tried to sell radioactive plates stolen from Chernobyl. For these reasons, a central reality is that nuclear weapons diminish the security of all states. Indeed, states which possess them become themselves targets of nuclear weapons.

In the past, talk of nuclear disarmament was confined to the margins of political debate, but now a chorus of national security officials- past and present- have joined calls for multi-lateral disarmament. The Obama administration sees the adoption of Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty important and US officials reportedly say efforts are now underway to find a way to start negotiations in new forums, away from Pakistan's influence. Pakistan is opposed to the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty because that would cut into their ability to match India's arsenal.

In recent time an organization has emerged--Global Zero. In the US, the debate was kick-started by a joint call for "getting to zero" from a group of veterans of the Col War, including Henry Kissinger and George Schultz.

Global Zero consists of 100 leading figures seeking practical steps towards nuclear abolition and gaining public support for that goal. They include former US President Jimmy Carter, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, former Brazilian President Fernando Cardoso, businessman Sir Richard Branson, Ehsan Ul-Haq, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Pakistan, and Brajesh Mishra, former Indian National Security Advisor.

Polling of 21 countries for Global Zero found an average of 76% of the population favouring an agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time-bound agreement.

The aim of Global Zero is to work on a plan that could lead to a phased nuclear reduction which would eliminate all nuclear weapons in 20 to 25 years.

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Of Formalin, Fakery and Fraudulence

ZIAUDDIN CHOUDHURY

VERY recently Dhaka citizens witnessed a much desired drive against formalin treated food by government with support of civil society watchdogs. This was overdue as people helplessly watched every fresh food item they touched, from fish to fruit and vegetables to milk tainted by a potent chemical that could slowly poison a person to death. The campaign received a lot of publicity over media, and we sitting abroad could also see how the law enforcers were randomly checking stalls of produce and throwing items suspected of formalin treatment into trash cans. Consumers and civil society activists lauded the raids while the vendors complained of excessive measures and questioned effectiveness of detecting devices. But the impact of the campaign, at least apparently, has been a success with reported reduction in the supply of formalin treated produce. A law controlling the import and distribution of this perilous chemical would also hopefully reduce the use of this material in tainting of food items.

The question that remains unanswered from this anti formalin campaign is why it began in the first place. Was it an absence of facilities that keep our produce and other food items fresh that led the vendors to dubious means to keep these fresh, or was it simply a desire to dupe consumers with fake products to make a profit from unsaleable merchandise? Would the tendency of the merchants to sell fake products or treat stale food using a different method stop if we had more and easily accessible chilling centers for produce and other perishable food items? Can we guarantee that our consumers will get fresh and untainted food items when the current campaign and raid is over? Unfortunately not.

The desire to profit from making fools of others, be it in business or politics, is a culture that we have been

unable to get out of. Politics and business work hand in hand, one feeds the other, imitates each other. What one tries to do in business, also tries it in politics.

A prime reason why many of the businesses take resort to unfair practices is profit maximization, and loss avoidance. Tainting food with formalin is relatively recent, but as adulteration practices go this is but one of many that have been foisted on consumers before. Our food has never been safe with greedy businesses that have tried to maximize profit by mixing edibles with chemicals, and sometime materials that were not intended for human consumption. Despite mounting evidences of adulteration the consumers suffered because we never had any surveillance of our food suppliers and food vendors, or any prosecution for flagrant violation of food safety laws. This happened because the axis that worked against the consumers, politics and business never allowed enforcement of the laws to protect the consumers.

Corruption of any kind, whether in politics, education or business, thrives in an enabling environment. Tainting food with harmful chemicals to fake it as fresh is no different from defrauding people with false promises. Just as people buy week old fruits that are sold to them as fresh, they are also forced to accept politicians who pretend to serve them, and then do the opposite. Politics and politicians provide the platform that sustains and promotes the culture of corruption. Thus we have fake votes for make believe elections, we have fake institutions that provide fake certificates, we have manufacturers that make fake medicines, and of course we have fake fish and fake fruits and vegetables.

Before this anti formalin drive we have had laws that were supposed to ensure safety of foods, prevention of adulteration, and prosecution of businesses that indulge in such malpractices. But these did not work because the enforcement was absent, and the climate that allows growth in malpractices grew luxuriantly

with overall breakdown of governance. Law breakers were not only indulged but also patronized and used to further political goals of some people. When people see that they can get away with crimes in one sector, they will attempt in other sectors because they are confident of never getting caught far from getting punished.

When a society is afflicted by malfeasance, it does not stay contained in government or public services alone; it spreads to all body parts of the society. Law alone cannot stop this virus, it requires action from all members of the society. Wish this anti formalin drive initiated by government and civil society activists could be replicated to stop the other menaces in the country although I am mindful that corruption, fakery and fraudulence cannot be uprooted in one generation. But at least a start could be made. And this start could begin with public vigilance and demands for improvement in public services, and make them more transparent. It could start with demands for transparency in law enforcement services, health services, education services, and in agencies and institutions that are meant to provide service to the public. It could also start along with educating people their rights, and how to ensure that these rights are not denied to them.

All cases of corruption, fraud or fakery have two common elements, enticement and opportunity. The enticement to indulge in any of these is offered by the environment where the perpetrators observe others get away with their transgressions, and opportunity is provided by lack of vigilance or lax law enforcement. We will continue to have recurrences of malfeasance and criminal acts in the society if we do not have a national determination and wherewithal to prevent these. I hope and pray that the anti-formalin drive will spread to eradicate other evils that plague us.

The writer is a US based commentator and political analyst.

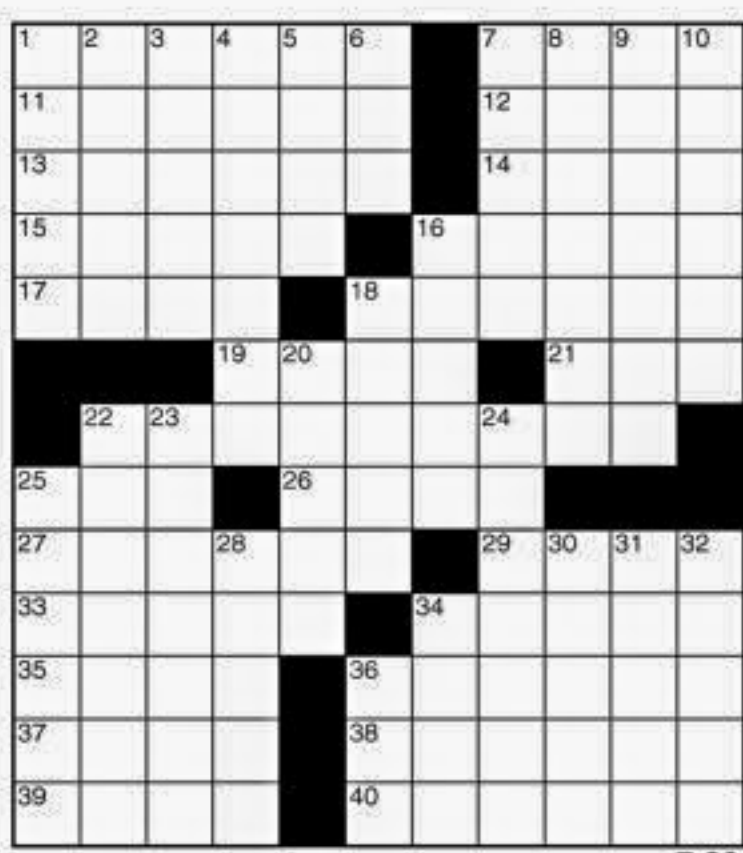
QUOTABLE Quote

Happiness: a good bank account, a good cook, and a good digestion.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
1 Saws
7 Lose
11 Taxi parts
12 Bit of fiction
13 State without proof
14 Beame and Burrows
15 Picnic side dishes
16 Computer part
17 Window part
18 Tot tender
19 Inkling
21 Crumb carrier
22 Filberts
25 Shoe hue
26 Big family
27 Texan team
29 Flight cost
33 Hymn singers
34 Joystick wielder
35 Singer Redding
36 Shady pavilion
37 Lion's pride
38 Made level
39 Historic times
40 Interfere
- DOWN**
1 Stockpile
2 Perry's assistant
3 One of the Titans
4 "Golly!"
5 Work units
6 Toronto-to-D.C. dir.
7 Set out
8 Animal's area
9 Craps naturals
10 Maroon
16 Goddess of the hunt
18 Hawks
20 Home design
22 Tweet symbol
23 Chemist Lavoisier
24 Not daunted
25 Puget Sound city
28 Hills
30 Make better
31 Defy authority
32 Eat away
34 Donated
36 Tiara feature



CRYPTOQUOTE
U GQPO OJBKDOT CYOQLHD LGO ROWKJT IHKKZUJC ... RMTTOJHD DKM SUJT -- QH LGO QCO KS SUSLD, RQD -- LGQLQ FGKHO JFO HUSO GQR KNOJOT IOSKYO DKM. --QCQLGQ WGYURLUO

Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:
GROWING OLD IS NO MORE THAN A BAD HABIT WHICH A BUSY MAN HAS NO TIME TO FORM. -- ANDRE MAUROIS

Yesterday's answer

WOMEN SOFAS
ATONE ALOFT
LORDE TERRY
LOT DUO TIL
ELI INN ICE
DEFIED AFAR
ISRAELI
ARCH TRACTS
TIA LEO AYE
LAT ODD TRA
ALIAS IDIOT
STOLE NOONE
TONER GONER

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte

