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Flash Executive Summary Report

Hamas is the Palestinian terrorist organization controlling the Gaza Strip and is in constant friction (and sometimes war) with Israel. The U.S. has designated Hamas as an international terrorist organization since 1997. Hamas, following its political arm, has been in control of Gaza since 2006.

On October 7, Hamas struck Israel with thousands of missiles and infiltrated Israel's borders in several areas by land, sea, and in the air, with terror attacks that included kidnapping many Israelis, including Americans. The Israeli death toll continues to mount, at this writing, surpassing 1,200 Israeli dead and many more injured. Americans are also among the dead. Prime Minister Netanyahu declared war and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are fully-mobilizing. The IDF has largely reestablished security across Southern Israel and continues to prosecute attacks against Hamas in Gaza, as well as responding to limited attacks by Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon, and militants in Syria.

For the big picture, please see last month's ExSum on the Abraham Accords; this context likely underpins the reasons why Hamas, backed by Iran, initiated this strategic attack.

Implications:

- Since 2006, Israel and Hamas have experienced multiple lethal engagements. However, the terror attacks in this conflict represent the most significant loss of life, and the first time Hamas has successfully infiltrated hundreds of terrorists into Israel to carry out acts of terrorism, that included extreme atrocities on civilians.
- Collateral damage and deaths will continue to steadily mount on both sides.
- We will gain a clearer understanding of the depth of involvement Iran had in the planning and resourcing of this latest attack, but the collective assessment is that the attacks by Hamas were likely directed by Iran, or at least had Iran's active support.
- After the Hamas attacks on Israel in 2021, Israel continued attacks in the Gaza Strip, targeting Hamas leaders and arms caches – this too could be a reason for the renewed attacks.
- Other Islamic militants – such as Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, have joined in limited attacks on Israel; time will tell if this spirals into a wider conflict.
- Iran and its proxies (Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Lebanese Hezbollah) are adamantly against the Abraham Accords, the U.S./Israeli initiative towards a normalization agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, and any attempt to legitimize Israel.
- The West and most nations will support Israel's right to self-defense.
 - The U.S. is delivering precision munitions and has ordered an additional U.S. Carrier Battle Group to the Mediterranean, deploying fighter aircraft to the region, and will supply more "Iron Dome" interceptors as well as intelligence and planning support.
 - The U.S. deployments are primarily to deter those that may try to expand the conflict.



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Forecast:

- This conflict will not be the usual “attack and counterattack” by opposing sides as seen in the past couple of decades in the region. The militant Palestinians armed and inspired by Iran will remain aggressive and Israel will conduct an extensive campaign to damage their enemies for operational and political necessity.
- Israel has a difficult way ahead, but they will remain resolute:
 - The Israeli government formed a war-cabinet to deal with the ongoing crisis, likely as an effort to secure national unity for bold decisions, such as conducting a ground invasion into Gaza.
 - Israel fully mobilized its national defense system and has activated 350,000 reservists, most of whom will augment existing IDF units across all service branches, as well as augmentation to select special operations and police units.
 - Israel’s “Iron Dome” missile defense system is vulnerable to massed missile attacks; and ballistic missile launches from Hamas will continue to create havoc and death.
 - Captured hostages will be used as human shields to attempt to protect Hamas leadership and key Hamas facilities from Israeli attacks, creating a dilemma for Israel’s retaliation.
 - Expect Israel, in advance of a ground invasion of Gaza, to continue targeting Hamas leadership, communications, command and control, arms caches, and terrorists in Gaza.
 - If Hezbollah (with Iranian support) were to conduct large-scale attacks against Israel, the war would dramatically change, as Hezbollah is not only a more powerful foe than that of Hamas, but it would be a two-front war for Israel. This may remain an open question until this conflict concludes.
- Increasing tensions may occur in the West Bank as the number of Palestinian civilians are killed and wounded in Gaza. While the Palestinian Authority does not seek confrontation with Israel and the IDF, emotions over the targeting of Palestinian civilians will likely incite violence.
- Israel will continue to work with Egypt and the international community, to develop an acceptable plan for the departure of non-combatant Palestinians to leave Gaza prior to the start of an IDF ground offensive. If this proves successful, Hamas may attempt to disrupt this initiative to add to Israel’s challenges to avoid excessive collateral damage to civilians.
- U.S. Forces deploying into the region are in support of deterrence and to integrate with the IDF, providing intelligence collection, liaison, and to assist in assessments and planning. U.S. Forces will attempt to rescue American hostages, if located.
- This conflict will probably not end until the human toll (Israeli or Palestinian) drives pressures for a cease fire, or Israel meets its stated objective of eliminating Hamas from Gaza. Urban combat will be a costly campaign in terms of combat casualties with the IDF, the loss of Palestinian civilians to collateral damage, and potentially the loss of the hostages held in Gaza by Hamas.
- Direct conflict between Israel and Iran in the near-term is unlikely. The collective open-source assessment, does not indicate that Iran played a direct role in the planning of the atrocities committed by Hamas.
- Until conflict termination that could take weeks-to-months, markets will be impacted, many Israeli businesses will close, and energy prices will climb. Normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, with the economic boom that could follow, will be paused, but likely not derailed.

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