



EURASIA SECURITY WATCH

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of
Security in the Post-Soviet Space

Eurasia Security Watch: No. 325

July 13, 2014

ISRAELI OFFENSIVE AGAINST HAMAS ESCALATES

The latest bout of conflict between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip is escalating quickly. According to reports, over 440 projectiles have been fired since at Israel from the Gaza Strip, though Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system has helped ensure no civilian casualties to date. Israel has responded by striking some 750 sites in Gaza targeting Hamas militants and killing 77 Palestinians as of Friday. Four senior Hamas commanders are thought to have been killed, though Reuters reports a majority of the casualties were civilians. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has accused Hamas of war crimes because they are indiscriminately target Israeli civilians with rockets while hiding said rockets in residential areas, endangering Palestinian civilians in the process. Both sides are suggesting this latest bout of violence is unlikely to end anytime soon. At least 77 Palestinians have died since Israel has upped their offensive against Hamas on July 8th in response to rockets being fired into Israel. (Reuters July 10, 2014).

MAJOR OIL FIELD REOPENS IN LIBYA

Libya has taken a step forward as one of their major oilfields is coming back online after a four-month workers strike against the National Oil Corporation. The restart of El Sharara comes as rebels have returned to oil ports, Ras Lanuf and Es Sider, to government control after occupying the sites for the past year. Together both terminals process around 500,000 barrels per day. Control over the oil fields have been a major source of conflict in post-Qaddafi Libya and Libya's economy has been severely hampered in the process. Meanwhile, the results of the country's recent general elections are expected to be released on July 20, nearly a month after the elections were held. (Reuters July 8, 2014.)

HOUTHIS SEIZE MAJOR CITY IN YEMEN

Shi'ite militants seized control of the northern city of Omran in Yemen on July 8. Omran is one of the biggest cities in the country's north and the takeover constitutes a major blow to President Hadi and the failure of yet another ceasefire in the decade-long battle between the Yemeni government and rebel Houthi fighters. The fight for Omran resulted in the death of around 200 people and injured over 100, in a conflict that pitted the Shi'ite Houthis against Sunni Muslim tribesmen allied with government troops. The Houthis have stated that they have no intention of moving farther south and have no designs on the Yemeni capital of Sana'a. (Reuters July 8, 2014).

INDO-ISRAELI DEFENSE COOPERATION RISES

India and Israel are negotiating a pact to increase defense cooperation. The Indian Defense Secretary visited Tel Aviv from July 1-3 where he discussed acquiring high-powered radars for ground tracking, a variety of missiles, a new generation of precision guided munitions, and airborne warning control systems. He reportedly also pushed for the continuation of a long delayed Indo-Israeli Long Missile Range Surface to Air Missile project. This project has been in the works since 2005, costs close to \$600 million and is years behind schedule. The delay leaves India's newly-acquired aircraft carrier (purchased from Russia at a cost of over \$2 billion) without any anti-missile systems. (Defense News July 3, 2014).

ISLAMIC STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR BAGHDAD BOMBINGS

This Islamic State (formerly ISIS) has claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Baghdad on July 6, and has begun rounding up ex-Baathist party members and forcing them to pledge their allegiance to the Islamic State. Though the Baath Party was Sunni and many of its members are virulently anti-Shi'ite, they were traditionally enemies of Sunni fundamentalists like al Qaeda and its offshoots. Sunni leaders throughout the Middle East have begun openly condemning the Islamic State and questioning its legitimacy while urging their follows not to support the new "Caliphate." (Reuters July 8, 2014. Reuters July 8, 2014. Al Jazeera July 7, 2014.)