

Jimmy Carter, Lord Caradon, the Palestine Mandate, and U.N. Resolution 242 (Part III)

by Hugh Fitzgerald

The real "key words" of Resolution 242, as crafted mainly by Lord Caradon, are those about the need for "secure and defensible borders." [Carter doesn't even mention this phrase](#), which Lord Caradon thought was the most important provision of the Resolution. For Carter surely knows that the pre-1967 lines he wants Israel to be forced back into would fit no one's definition of "secure and defensible borders." But what would constitute "secure and defensible borders"? As noted in [Part I](#), the Israelis certainly think command of the heights of Judea and Samaria, and thus of the Jordan Valley and the invasion route from the East, remain essential. Were Israel pushed back to the 1949 armistice lines, a massed Arab army, with the weaponry the Arabs now possess, and coming from the East, could slice Israel in two at its 8-mile-wide waist.

In 1967, President Johnson asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to study what territorial adjustments would be necessary to meet Israel's minimum defense needs. They duly presented their military assessment of what, for Israel, would constitute "secure and defensible borders." Here is what they concluded:

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

(JCSM-373-67)

Subject: Middle East Boundaries

1. Reference is made to your memorandum, dated 19 June

1967, subjects as above, which requested the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, without regard to political factors, on the minimum territory, in addition to that held on 4 June 1967, Israel might be justified in retaining in order to permit a more effective defense against possible conventional Arab attack and terrorist raids.[emphasis added]

2. From a strictly military point of view, Israel would require the retention of some captured territory in order to provide militarily defensible borders. [emphasis added] Determination of territory to be retained should be based on accepted tactical principles such as control of commanding terrain, use of natural obstacles, elimination of enemy-held salients, and provision of defense in-depth for important facilities and installations. More detailed discussions of the key border areas mentioned in the reference are contained in the Appendix hereto. In summary, the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding these areas are as follows:
3. The Jordanian West Bank. Control of the prominent high ground running north-south through the middle of West Jordan generally east of the main north-south highway along the axis Jennin-Nablus-Bira-Jerusalem and then southeast to a junction with the Dead Sea at the Wadi el Daraja would provide Israel with a militarily defensible border. The envisioned defensive line would run just east of Jerusalem; however, provision could be made for internationalization of the city without significant detriment to Israel's defensive posture.
4. Syrian Territory Contiguous to Israel. Israel is particularly sensitive to the prevalence of terrorist raids and border incidents in this area. The presently occupied territory, the high ground running generally north-south on a line with Qunaitra about 15 miles inside the Syrian border, would give Israel control of the terrain which Syria has used effectively in

- harrassing the border area.*
- 5. The Jerusalem-Latrun Area. See subparagraph 2a above.*
 - 6. The Gaza Strip. By occupying the Gaza Strip, Israel would trade approximately 45 miles of hostile border for eight. Configured as it is, the strip serves as a salient for introduction of Arab subversion and terrorism, and its retention would be to Israel's military advantage.*
 - 7. The Negev-Sinai Border. Except for retention of the demilitarized zone around Al Awja and some territory for the protection of the port of Eilat, discussed below, continued occupation of the Sinai would present Israel with problems outweighing any military gains.*
 - 8. The Negev-Jordan-Aqaba-Strait of Tiran Area. Israel's objectives here would be innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba and protection of its port at Eilat. Israel could occupy Sharm ash-Shaykh with considerable inconvenience but could rely on some form of internationalization to secure free access to the gulf. Failing this, Israel would require key terrain in the Sinai to protect its use of the Strait of Tiran. Eilat, situated at the apex of Israel's narrow southern tip, is vulnerable to direct ground action from Egyptian territory. Israel would lessen the threat by retention of a portion of the Sinai Peninsula south and east of the Wadi el Gerafi then east to an intersection with the Gulf of Aqaba at approximately 29° 20' north latitude.*
 - 9. It is emphasized that the above conclusions, in accordance with your terms of reference are based solely on military considerations from the Israeli point of view.*

The Joint Chiefs thought Israel should retain Gaza; it did not. Gaza then became a terrorist center, lobbing missiles into Israel, which led to the Israeli incursion that defeated

Hamas.

But Israel still retains, and likely will not give up, control of the “West Bank.” It needs a minimum of defensive depth – that 8-mile wide waist will simply not do – and needs to control the Judean and Samaritan hills. Anyone reading the report of the Joint Chiefs, or simply looking at a map, would likely conclude that Israeli command of the “West Bank” is absolutely essential to its security. But, someone might object – say, Jimmy Carter – didn’t Israel win the 1967 war without that control? Yes, it did, but that was in a different world, before the OPEC trillions helped buy the Arab states hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of armaments; they now possess between ten and twenty times the weaponry that they had in 1967, and that includes advanced planes and missiles, that a half-century ago they did not possess. The element of surprise – and superb training – that allowed the Israelis to destroy the Egyptian air force in the first few hours of battle on June 4 is not something that Israel can count on ever again; nor should Israelis be asked to rely on such a near-miracle for their survival. The Israelis remember that the surprise Arab attack in October 1973 inflicted many casualties. The outcome was a near thing; the country held on by the skin of its teeth, thanks to American re-supplies of arms that, in a different political environment – with the likes of Keith Ellison presiding over the Democratic Party apparatus – can not necessarily be counted on.

None of this Israeli need for “secure and defensible borders” registers with Jimmy Carter. He thinks Israel should not only live permanently in a state of maximum peril, but trust to guarantees by the Palestinian Arabs – the “peace-loving” Slow Jihadists of the Palestinian Authority, rather than the Fast Jihadists of Hamas. Is he aware of the blood-curdling statements Mahmoud Abbas makes about Israel to his own people? Has he ever watched the celebration of killing Jews on children’s programs broadcast by “Palestinian” television? Or

noted the naming of sites in the West Bank after terrorists?

In addition to their rights derived from the Mandate for Palestine, Israelis should not be prevented from exercising their right, under Resolution 242, not to give back “all the” territories it won by force of arms, but instead to keep territories needed for “secure and defensible borders.” The Israelis have a perfect right – legally *and* morally – to hold onto those parts of Judea and Samaria that they now control. And they have a perfect right to build towns and villages (not “settlements,” for that word has come to imply both transience and illegitimacy) on “state and waste lands,” as the Mandate for Palestine specifically allows.

Jimmy Carter is hellbent on arriving at a “solution” to the Arab-Israeli conflict. But what makes Jimmy Carter think there is a “solution” to the Arab and Muslim war against Israel? The evidence supports quite a different view. I don’t think there is a “two-state” or three-state or *n*-state “solution” to a conflict that will continue forever, because it is based on Muslim hostility to a Jewish state, whatever its dimensions, on land Muslims once possessed, and in the midst of Muslim Arabdom.

That a conflict cannot be “solved” does not mean it is not manageable. Right now Israel can manage things. El-Sisi’s Egypt is clearly more worried about the Muslim Brotherhood and terrorists in the Sinai, and Hamas in Gaza. It’s Egypt that is now destroying the tunnels to Gaza, not Israel. And Syria is now and in the future will be wracked by internecine warfare. Assad and the Alawites are unlikely to risk everything they have managed to hold onto by taking on Israel.

But the Muslim masses do not accept Israel and never will. Right now the greatest threat comes from Iran, as it once came from Egypt and Syria. Israel is a permanent affront for many Muslims and it does not become less of an affront if it is pushed back, as Jimmy Carter wants it to be, to the armistice

lines of 1948-49. The two metaphors the Arabs routinely use for Israel are that it is a “knife” in the heart of Arabdom, or a “cancer” within the Arab body. You don’t pull a “knife” only part-way out, nor excise only part of a cancer. You have to remove the whole blade, cut out the whole tumor.

Carter’s obsession with pushing Israel back to the pre-1967 lines, his completely ignoring the Mandate for Palestine, his misreading of Resolution 242, his unshakeable belief that Israel should entrust its security to the likes of Mahmoud Abbas doing his no-one-here-but-us-accountants impersonation – all this suggests that behind the sweet habitat-for-humanity smile, and the treacly self-righteousness, Jimmy Carter suffers from a well-known pathological condition. Meanwhile, if you want to really understand the legal, historic, and moral claims of Israel, begin by reading the Mandate for Palestine. And then, to understand what U.N. Resolution 242 actually means, you should turn not to Jimmy Carter, but to the man who was most responsible for drafting that resolution, that is, the commonsensical Lord Caradon.

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