Operation Breaking Dawn

Operation Breaking Dawn was an Israeli military operation targeting Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the Gaza Strip lasting from August 5 to August 7.

It consisted of Israeli airstrikes on PIJ military and personnel targets in the Gaza Strip, to which PIJ responded by launching rockets at Israeli cities.

The goal of the operation was to weaken PIJ’s capabilities in order to prevent an attack against Israel, along with re-establishing Israeli deterrence.

Hamas, the Palestinian terror organization that governs Gaza, did not participate in the conflict.

Background

Palestinian Islamic Jihad is an Iran-backed terror organization whose goal is to annihilate Israel and create an Islamic Palestinian state. It is based in the Gaza Strip and operates terror cells in the West Bank.

The escalation that led to Operation Breaking Dawn began on August 1, when Israel arrested PIJ West Bank chief Bassem Saadi in Jenin.

Following the arrest, PIJ called for Israel to release Saadi and suggested it was preparing to retaliate. Israel initiated a partial lockdown in the Gaza envelope to protect Israeli civilians from an attack.

Israeli Airstrikes

In the afternoon of Friday, August 5, with a PIJ attack appearing increasingly imminent in Israeli intelligence assessments, the IDF announced Operation Breaking Dawn and began to carry out airstrikes against PIJ across Gaza, while continuing arrests of PIJ members in the West Bank.

Targets: PIJ terror tunnels, weapon storage facilities, military posts, anti-tank missiles, combatants, and senior officials

Total PIJ targets struck: 170

PIJ commanders eliminated: Tayseer Jabari (northern Gaza commander), Khaled Mansour (southern Gaza commander), Rafat al-Zamli (rocket unit commander)

Palestinians killed: 35 according to Israel, 44 according to the Palestinian Health Ministry
  - Israel has said that 11 Palestinian civilians were killed in airstrikes intended to target PIJ militants.
  - According to Israel, 15 Palestinian casualties were the result of PIJ rockets that misfired.

Palestinians injured: 360 according to the Palestinian Health Ministry
PIJ Rockets

In response to Israel’s airstrikes, PIJ launched rockets at Israel’s cities.

**Rockets launched:** 1,100  
**Rockets intercepted by the Iron Dome:** 380 (95% of those that would hit populated areas)  
**Rockets that hit within Gaza:** 200  
**Israelis killed:** 0  
**Israelis injured:** 31 taken to the hospital  
**Palestinians killed by PIJ rockets:** 15 according to Israel

Ceasefire

At 11:30pm local time on Sunday, August 7, an Egyptian-mediated ceasefire came into effect, ending the fighting and bringing Operation Breaking Dawn to a close.

PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah has claimed that Israel had agreed to release Saadi as a condition of the ceasefire, which Israel denies.

After the implementation of the ceasefire, Israel lifted security restrictions, reopening roads and crossings into Gaza.

Takeaways

From Israel’s perspective, Operation Breaking Dawn succeeded.

- Israel weakened PIJ, removed the imminent threat to Israeli civilians, and established deterrence.
- Hamas remained on the sidelines and the conflict did not spread beyond Gaza.
- Israel received rhetorical support from its allies and minimal condemnations internationally.

The operation was also a personal success for Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who had yet to face a security challenge and has no operational military background.

In the long term, the operation will not change the status quo around Gaza.

- PIJ is expected to rebuild its capabilities.
- Hamas, a terror organization, continues to rule Gaza.
- Gaza’s 2 million residents, most of whom cannot leave the Strip, continue to face overlapping humanitarian crises.
- Israelis near the Gaza border will continue to live in fear of rockets, missiles, and snipers, and another confrontation will inevitably come.