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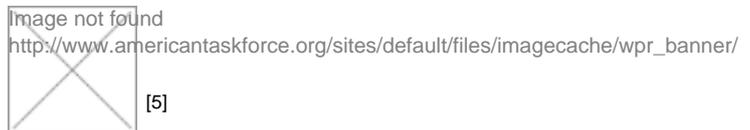
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December 31, 2008

Middle East News: World Press Roundup

The Israeli offensive in Gaza continues, and seems set to expand (1, 2, 3, 4). The Los Angeles Times suggests the US government is concerned about the effects of the attack, while Egypt and other Arab states bear the brunt of anger and criticism (5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15). The Washington Post and Ha'aretz examine Israel's leadership, while Hamas accuses the PA of conspiring with Israel (10, 14, 9). Mkhaimar Abusada in the Daily Star and Tony Karon in Time magazine examine the terms in which both Israel and Hamas would seek a cease-fire (11, 12).

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Israel Rejects 48-Hour Cease-Fire Plan

Article Author(s): Ethan Bronner
Taghreed El-Khodary

Media Outlet: The New York Times

Date: January 1, 2009

Source Link(s):

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/01/world/middleeast/01mideast.html?_r=1&bl&ex=123... ^[6]

After five straight days of punishing air attacks, Israel rejected a proposal for a 48-hour cease-fire in its military onslaught in Gaza on Wednesday, saying it would maintain pressure on Hamas. But it did not rule out future diplomacy and was open to ways of increasing humanitarian aid.

The decision was announced after a security cabinet meeting here.

Israel set to maintain offensive for 'weeks'

Article Author(s): Tobias Buck
Andrew England
Peggy Hollinger

Media Outlet: The Financial Times

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/925b84c8-d6dc-11dd-9bf7-000077b07658.html?nclick_check... [7]

Israel said yesterday its military was ready for "weeks of action" in spite of growing diplomatic pressure and Arab anger over its bombardment of the Hamascontrolled Gaza Strip.

The quartet of Middle East peace brokers - the United Nations, the US, Russia and the European Union - last night urged a ceasefire in Gaza and southern Israel. The UN said: "They called for an immediate ceasefire that would be fully respected."

An emergency meeting of EU ministers in Paris was expected last night to call for a 48-hour truce to allow medical supplies through to Gaza's civilian population.

IAF bombs Gaza mosque being used as weapons storehouse

Article Author(s): Amos Harel
Avi Issacharoff

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1051305.html> [8]

The Israel Air Force on Wednesday evening bombed a mosque in a southern Gaza Strip which Hamas had been using to store part of its rocket arsenal.

Shin Bet officials said that over the last few days, Palestinian militants have been seen carrying Katyusha and Qassam rockets, as well as a large supply of other weapons, around the vicinity of the mosque. The Shin Vet said that these weapons were destroyed in the IAF strike.

Defiant Hamas Says It Can Outlast Israel as Gaza Strip Smolders

Article Author(s): Saud Abu Ramadan
Jonathan Ferziger

Media Outlet: Bloomberg

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s):

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=afW4NRsMSPnA&refer=home> [9]

Amid the smoldering ruins of European-built ministries demolished by air raids, Hamas leaders say they are confident of their ability to outlast the Israeli military onslaught in the Gaza Strip.

"Our people are willing to pay the price and resist this brutality," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in a telephone interview from Gaza. "Israel will eventually weaken, and the popularity of Hamas will only grow."

Behind closed doors, U.S. seeks Israel exit strategy

Article Author(s): Paul Richter

Media Outlet: The Los Angeles Times

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/mideastemail/la-fg-us-gaza31-2008d...> [10]

While publicly declaring strong support for Israel, the Bush administration is increasingly nervous about the 4-day-old campaign in the Gaza Strip and is urging its ally to settle on a timetable and exit strategy, say foreign diplomats and Middle East experts close to the discussions.

U.S. officials are concerned that the campaign could drag on without destroying Hamas, and might even bolster support for the militant group -- just as the 2006 Israeli campaign in Lebanon strengthened Hezbollah, they say.

Moderate Arab States Feel Popular Anger

Article Author(s): Robert Worth

Media Outlet: The New York Times

Date: December 30, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/31/world/middleeast/31arabs.html> [11]

After four days of Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, an outpouring of popular anger is putting pressure on American allies in the Arab world and appears to be worsening divisions in the region.

The sharpest rhetorical attacks have been aimed at Egypt, which is widely seen as having aided the Israeli campaign by closing its border with Gaza.

Arabs outraged by bloodshed in Gaza venting their anger at Egypt, as much as at Israel

Article Author(s): Sarah El Deeb

Media Outlet: The Associated Press

Date: December 30, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-ap-ml-egypt-gaza,0,3174872.st...> [12]

The Israeli bombing campaign in the Gaza Strip has unleashed outrage across the Middle East ? but the anger is being vented as much against Egypt as it is at Israel.

Protesters have attacked Egyptian embassies, accusing Cairo of helping Israel's longtime blockade of the territory and even giving a green light for the offensive ? a sign of the gulf between an Arab public and some U.S.-allied governments that dislike Gaza's Hamas rulers.

While Israel fights in Gaza, Egypt and Saudi Arabia take on Iran

Article Author(s): Jonathan Spyer

Media Outlet: The Jerusalem Post

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s):

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1230456537121&pagename=JPost%2FJPArti...> [13]

Israel's campaign in Gaza is serving to expose the strategic fault lines in the Arab and Muslim world.

The essential divide is between, on the one hand, states aligned with the West - chief among them Egypt and Saudi Arabia - and on the other an alliance led by Iran, of which Hamas forms a part. Israel's action in Gaza has led to unprecedented tensions between representatives of these rival blocs. Because of the strategic importance of Egyptian control of the Rafah Crossing, this divide also has immediate practical implications for the direction and likely outcome of the current battle.

Hamas: PA conspiring with Israel

Article Author(s): Khaled Abu Toameh

Media Outlet: The Jerusalem Post

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s):

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1230456537100&pagename=JPost%2FJPArti...> [14]

As the IDF offensive concluded its fourth day on Tuesday, Hamas accused the Palestinian Authority of planning to return to the Gaza Strip with the help of Israel.

According to a report published by the Hamas-affiliated Palestine Information Center Web site, PA President Mahmoud Abbas has ordered his officials in Ramallah to set up an "emergency room" to prepare for reassuming control over the Gaza Strip after the Hamas government is toppled by Israel.

It said the emergency room consisted of commanders of the PA security forces and the interior minister.

Behind Gaza Operation, An Uneasy Triumvirate

Article Author(s): Griff Witte

Media Outlet: The Washington Post

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/30/AR2008123003252....> [15]

Three Israeli leaders met in secret Friday to review the plan of attack, according to a government spokesman. The targets had been selected, the warplanes readied. Clear skies were forecast over the Gaza Strip.

Hours later, Israeli forces began an aerial assault against the Hamas movement that caught nearly everyone by surprise.

Israel's goal, and Hamas': a cease-fire on better terms

Article Author(s): Mkhaimar Abusada

Media Outlet: The Daily Star

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s):

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=5&article_id=98760 [16]

The truce between Hamas and Israel ended in the early hours of December 19, but the accusations over why it ended have followed the missiles and rockets across the border.

Hamas accuses Israel of not complying with the terms of the six-month Egyptian-mediated truce under which Israel was expected to end its siege and blockade of the Gaza Strip, reopen the commercial border crossing between Gaza and Israel and halt its military activities against Gazans.

Israel Versus Hamas: How to Shape a Ceasefire

Article Author(s): Tony Karon

Media Outlet: Time

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1869122,00.html?iid=tsmodule>
[17]

In the end, Israel and Hamas both know that there will be a cease-fire in Gaza. Its timing and terms will be "negotiated" in bombs and bloodshed in the days ahead; it will be mediated by a third party or a combination of third parties; and it will be shaped by a complex regional power game involving an array of competing Israeli politicians, the rival Palestinian leaderships of Hamas and President Mahmoud Abbas, Egypt, Syria and even more distant players such as Turkey, Iran and, of course, the United States.

Hamas racks up its first diplomatic victory in Gaza campaign

Article Author(s): Zvi Barel

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1051356.html> [18]

President Hosni Mubarak could not keep silent any longer about the attack on Egypt in the press. His decision to explicitly state Egypt's position that the West Bank and Gaza are part of the same country, and that the Rafah crossing will open only under the conditions of the 2005 agreement (to which Egypt is not a signatory), is part of the public diplomacy Mubarak has been dragged into against his will.

After sterling start to Gaza op, Barak proves to be a petty

politician

Article Author(s): Amir Oren

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1051360.html> [19]

Almost every war of the last four decades has resulted in the ouster of a defense minister. Levi Eshkol lost the defense portfolio on the eve of the Six-Day War, Moshe Dayan after the Yom Kippur War, Ariel Sharon after the First Lebanon War, Amir Peretz after the Second Lebanon War. Current defense minister Ehud Barak, whose performance during the first days of Operation Cast Lead increased his public support, spoiled his image Tuesday with his very own words.

Nasrallah and War on Egypt

Article Author(s): Tariq Alhomayed

Media Outlet: Asharq Alawsat

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 31, 2008

Source Link(s): <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=15213> [20]

Rather than having to listen to him, I read a transcript of the speech delivered by ?king? Hassan Nasrallah, as there is a difference between watching the performance of the leader of the Iranian-affiliated party and actually reading what he said. Nasrallah did not hesitate in attacking Egypt, and calling on the Arabs to make today, and every day, another Battle of Karbala!

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[7] http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/925b84c8-d6dc-11dd-9bf7-000077b07658.html?nclick_check=1
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