

[Turkish \(blood\)bath](#)

[Ankara ambushes Israel at sea](#)

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Ralph Peters

Yesterday's "aid convoy" incident off the coast of Gaza wasn't about bringing humanitarian supplies to the terrorist-ruled territory. It wasn't even about Israel.

It was about Turkey's determination to position itself as the leading Muslim state in the Middle East.

Three ships of that six-ship pro-terror convoy flew Turkish flags and were crowded with Turkish citizens. The Ankara government -- led by Islamists these days -- sponsored the "aid" operation in a move to position itself as the new champion of the Palestinians.

And Turkish decision-makers knew Israel would have to react -- and were waiting to exploit the inevitable clash. The provocation was as cynical as it was carefully orchestrated.



So-called "peace activists" - more like pro-terrorist savages - attack Israeli commandos with an iron bar, among other weapons, aboard the Gaza "aid" ship.

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The lead vessel, the Mavi Marmara, just happened to have an al-Jazeera TV crew on board to film Israel's response. Ironically, the early videos would've been counterproductive, had world leaders and journalists not been programmed to blame everything on Israel.

Those videos showed Israeli commandos rappelling onto the ship with both hands on the rope (making it rather hard to use a weapon), yet activists claimed the Israelis opened fire as they descended.

Purely by coincidence, dozens of "peace activists" waited with sharpened iron bars, clubs, slingshots -- and rifles. Of course, the nine dead in the melee were all Israel's victims.

The first wave of Israeli commandos reportedly were armed only with paintball rounds for crowd control. Inspect those videos of maddened peaceniks assaulting the soldiers as they landed on deck. You don't see any Israelis pointing rifles -- they're fending off blows.

But the claims of pro-terrorist "peace advocates" are given instant credence.

The US government's initial response was restrained, but Israel's Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) understandably canceled his meeting with President Obama, scheduled for today.

Bibi's got an emergency on his hands back home, as well-organized protests sweep the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Europeans and UN bonzes rage at Israel with unseemly relish, but ignore the luxury lifestyles of Gaza's insider elite and the fact that no Palestinian's going hungry. The Israelis had even offered to transfer the aid aboard those ships to the Palestinians -- as long as they could inspect it.

But neither the activists nor the Turkish government wanted a negotiated outcome. This was a stunt from the start.

Now, as we wait to see if Hamas and [Hezbollah](#) up the ante, the world ignores Turkey's decisive role in this fiasco.

The US and the [European Union](#) cling to the fiction that Turkey's a "westernized Muslim democracy." But Turkey's moving to the east as fast as the Islamist leaders of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) can drag it there.

Turkish leaders visit the West and sing, "Democracy, democracy, democracy!" We coo and clap. Then they go east and cry, "Islam, Islam, Islam!" And we insist they don't mean it.

Then there's Turkey's unfortunate [NATO](#) membership. Since the rise of its Islamists, Turkey has been a [Trojan](#) horse, not an ally. What happens now if Ankara provokes a military confrontation? How would we respond, given NATO's mutual-defense agreements?

The madcap agenda of Turkey's current rulers is to create a 21st-century version of the Ottoman Empire. Turks even mutter about the caliphate -- headed for centuries by the Turkish sultan. This is explosive stuff. And the Turks are playing with matches.

But we've obstinately ignored every warning sign. First, our "ally" stabbed us in the back on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, denying our troops their planned routes into Iraq. Then the Turkish media intensified its anti-American fantasies.

Headscarves became de rigeur for the wives of top officials in Ankara as the Turks made mischief in Iraq. Emulating the history-obliterating Saudis, the Turks began work on the vast Ilisu Dam -- which will permanently submerge pre-Islamic and Kurdish archaeological sites of incalculable value. (The Bamiyan Buddhas destroyed by the [Taliban](#) were of comparatively minor interest to researchers.)

Then, just last month, the Turks moved to provide the Iranian regime with cover for its nuclear program. And we still didn't get it.

The most dramatic transformation in the Middle East since the fall of the shah is playing out before us. And we can't see behind the mask of the "plight of the Palestinians" (a key Obama administration concern).

In yesterday's confrontation, Israel behaved clumsily. The peace activists behaved savagely. The Turks behaved cynically. The world reacted predictably.

And Washington scratched its head.

Ralph Peters' latest book is "Endless War."

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