



Hamas' Must-See TV

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Hamas may not have funds to pay the salaries of civil servants and improve social services for Palestinians. But resources to fund its propaganda efforts? That, evidently, is not a problem. This month, the terrorist organization that governs Gaza and the West Bank launched a satellite television station.

The new station will be broadcast by Arabsat, majority-owned by the Saudi government. Arabsat, along with Nilesat, owned by the Egyptian government, already distribute the programming of Al Manar, the television station of Hezbollah.

Hamas, Hezbollah and Al Manar have all been officially designated by the U.S. government as terrorist entities. Meanwhile, the Saudi government runs commercials in the U.S. claiming to be America's "ally"

in the War on Terrorism. And the Egyptian government presents itself as our moderate Arab friend – in exchange for billions of dollars in American aid.

The Hamas television station is called "The Light of Al Aqsa." Thanks to the Saudi government, its broadcasts will be available throughout the Middle East, North Africa and Europe as well. A senior Hamas official, Fathi Hammad, was candid enough to say that its mission would be to challenge "the Western culture that has invaded our territory."

If the model for Al Aqsa is Al Manar, it will feature a steady drumbeat of vilification and dehumanization of Americans, Israelis and Jews. It also will glorify suicide bombing, help recruit terrorists, raise funds

for terrorist operations and directly incite terrorism.

Why is Hamas doing this now? One strong possibility is that Hamas expects to soon be at war - with Israel, certainly, but also possibly with Fatah, the Palestinian organization it defeated at the polls early this year.

During the recent war in Lebanon, Al Mana proved an effective weapon for Hezbollah. Through its broadcasts -- and with the help of its Saudi and Egyptian satellite providers -- Hezbollah was able to drive its messages to the Arab world, into Europe and beyond. Among those messages: that Israel was intentionally targeting civilians, rather than Hezbollah fighters. That false charge diverted attention from the fact that Hezbollah was using Lebanese Christian and Muslim civilians as human shields, while also firing missiles at the Jews and Muslims who coexist peacefully in the northern Israeli city of Haifa.

Hamas wants to have the same communications capability, particularly if the conflicts it has been cultivating escalate. The relationship between Hamas and Fatah's leader, Palestinian Authority Chairman president Mahmoud Abbas, has been growing increasingly tense. Hamas Interior Minister Said Sayam has accused Abbas of planning a coup and has announced the deployment of a new, armed operational force in the West Bank where Fatah support is strongest. Abbas has reportedly ordered PA security forces to prevent such deployment.

At the same time, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is deciding what he needs to do to stop the Kassam missiles that have been raining down from Gaza virtually every day since the Israeli withdrawal from that territory more than a year ago. Also on his to-do list: blocking the smuggling of arms into Gaza through the Philadelphi route and Rafah crossing, destroying the anti-tank missiles and industrial explosives already smuggled into Gaza, and demolishing the tunnels that Hamas has been building in the direction of Israel's security fence.

In addition, Israelis would like to secure the release of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, a soldier captured in June by Hamas combatants operating on Israeli soil. This week, Israel's UN ambassador, Dan Gillerman, accused Iran of paying money to Hamas to make sure Shalit's captivity continues.

In these circumstances, Hamas wants the ability to deliver its spin directly to Arab audiences, to win their sympathy and support, to raise money and perhaps recruit volunteers. And it wants to use satellite television to reach deep into Europe to incite Arabic speakers -- for example in the suburbs of Paris where French police are taking casualties daily in what they term an "intifada;" in London, where British security officials are desperately trying to track proliferating Al Qaeda cells; and elsewhere in Europe where radical jihadist activity is on the rise.

The Europeans appear to be doing little to stop the Saudis and Egyptians from helping Hamas and Hezbollah incite terrorism. By contrast, it will not be surprising if -- besides missile factories and weapons wa-

rehouses-- the Israeli army soon targets Hamas television studios. And should a Palestinian civil war break out, it is not hard to imagine that Fatah might do the same.

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