

# When Israel Bombed AP's Gaza Office

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*Wednesday was Nakba Day—the day commemorating the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians with the creation of Israel, in 1948—but there was another anniversary worth remembering. The day a foreign country bombed the offices of a major U.S. press outlet, accusing it, without evidence, of harboring terrorists. And a significant portion of the US media spun the story to support the foreign country.*

On May 15, 2021, as part of its “Operation Guardian of the Walls” military campaign in Gaza, Israel bombed the Associated Press offices’ building, based on the still evidence-free claim that the AP headquarters “housed Hamas”. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the week prior, IDF bombed two other office buildings that “housed more than a dozen international and local media outlets.”

Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) gave the tenants of the al-Jalaa Building in Gaza—which included AP, other news agencies including Al-Jazeera, and residential homes—a stern warning. IDF informed them they had one hour to evacuate their homes before the building would be bombed by Israeli missiles. Sixty minutes and three Israeli missiles later, the 12-story building was leveled to the ground.

The IDF posted a short [vague statement](#) that provided no evidence for their claim the building was being used by terrorists but made sure to repeat the term “Hamas terror organization” four times, in just four sentences—five times if you count “Hamas military intelligence” in the headline.



15.05.2021



# IDF strikes multi-story building which contained military assets belonging to Hamas military intelligence

⚡ 15.05.21

IDF Editorial Team

A short while ago, IDF fighter jets struck a multi-story building which contained military assets belonging to the intelligence offices of the **Hamas terror organization**.

The building contained civilian media offices, which the **Hamas terror organization** hides behind and uses as human shields. The **Hamas terror organization** deliberately places military targets at the heart of densely populated civilian areas in the Gaza Strip.

Prior to the strike, the IDF provided advance warning to civilians in the building and allowed sufficient time for them to evacuate the site.

Please find attached is an aerial photo of the multi-story building which military assets belonging to the **Hamas terror organization** intelligence:

The AP's CEO at the time, Gary Pruitt, said the news agency had been in the building for 15 years and "we have had no indication Hamas was in the building or active in the building."

So could Israel have been lying? Well, retired US Army colonel and former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, Lawrence Wilkerson seems to think so.

Let me let me preface these remarks with I never, never, ever believe Israeli figures. I've been in the government too long to know that the Israelis are patent liars in their intelligence community, in their propaganda community, certainly, and in their leadership. They are inveterate liars. Let me say that again. They are liars. So you can't believe anything that comes out of Jerusalem. It's all propaganda.

The fact that Israel [lied](#) to the international press just one week prior about a fake ground invasion, to trick Hamas into giving up their positions, doesn't help Israel's case. On the contrary, it clearly shows that Israel puts military victory over truth, and has no respect for the press.

# *A Press Corps Deceived, and the Gaza Invasion That Wasn't*

A spokesman led the international media to believe that Israeli forces had entered Gaza. They hadn't. But the army wanted Hamas to think they had.

Israeli military spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus [claimed](#) that “Hamas used the building for a military intelligence office and weapons development” but “[could not provide evidence](#)” to back up the claims without “compromising” intelligence efforts.

This “trust me I have the evidence” bullshit is reminiscent of the false narrative that fueled the 2003 Iraq War and the more recent Trump/Russia hoax. Such a pathetic cover story is enough to make most conservatives cringe but ultimately, many conservatives were tricked into celebrating anti-American terrorism—the bombing of civilian infrastructure that housed an American news outlet.

A pro-Israel disinformation campaign, attempting to justify the bombing, began at the Washington Free Beacon before spreading across conservative media. The Republican-aligned Beacon has a history of lying and smear campaigns. It was founded by Bil Kristol, famous for helping the Bush admin lie America into the disastrous Iraq War. It went on to fund the Fusion GPS anti-Trump research that would later, under Democrat tutelage, hire Christopher Steele, a crucial source of the Trump/Russia investigation hoax, and more recently, the Beacon [reported](#) the Jewish girl “[Stabbed in the Eye](#)” hoax [as fact](#).

On the same day of the AP building bombing, the Beacon published an “[exclusive](#)” to defend IDF’s missile attack on the American press in Gaza. It cited two sources: (1) a Twitter post of Beacon contributor Noah Pollak, and (2) an old article published seven years prior in 2014 by Matti Friedman, a former AP reporter, and former IDF soldier.

Pollack’s Twitter post cited an anonymous source he described as, “a well-placed friend in the IDF,” claiming that the AP office building “contained multiple Hamas operations & offices including weapons manufacturing and military intelligence,” adding that, “The building also housed an Islamic Jihad office. And AP’s local reporters knew about it.”



**Noah Pollak** ✓  
@NoahPollak



Spoke to a well-placed friend in the IDF just now. The bombed AP office building contained multiple Hamas operations & offices including weapons manufacturing and military intelligence. The building also housed an Islamic Jihad office. And AP's local reporters knew about it.

6:01 PM · May 15, 2021

[“This info will come out soon,”](#) he said.



**Noah Pollak** ✓  
@NoahPollak



This info will come out soon. And yes, the Israelis are doing a poor job of getting important information out in a timely fashion. Longstanding problem.

6:13 PM · May 15, 2021

Yes, that’s right. He said, “This info will come out soon.” Over three years later now, “this info” supporting his claims still hasn’t come out.

That alone is enough to completely discredit Pollak. But he’d already proven himself unbelievable. He ran the Emergency Committee for Israel (ECI) (another “[clown show](#)” created by Kristol) which even the President of the Anti-Defamation League—not exactly an anti-Israel organization—called “[misleading, distorted, inaccurate](#)”. He was also [caught](#) leading an astroturfed pro-Israel counterprotest on a college campus. (Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?)

Nevertheless, Pollak’s completely unsubstantiated claims were published immediately by the usual suspects—[Fox News](#), [Newsmax](#), [New York Post](#), etc. The Republican party-aligned outlets also followed the Beacon’s lead, citing its second source, Friedman’s 2014 article.

Like Pollak, Friedman also had a “well-placed friend” who “suggests there were indeed Hamas offices” in the AP building.



**Matti Friedman**  
@MattiFriedman



I take army statements like I take foreign press reports – with several grains of salt. But a conversation with a friend who is intimately familiar with military decision-making right now suggests there were indeed Hamas offices there.

7:02 AM · May 16, 2021

Oh boy, another anonymous “[friend](#)”! Despite sounding so sure of his “intimately familiar with military decision-making” friend’s secret information, Friedman also wrote on Twitter that “Contrary to what I’ve seen attributed to me today, I didn’t write [in 2014] that Hamas operated out of the same building, and don’t know if that’s true”.



**Matti Friedman**  
@MattiFriedman



In my two essays from 2014, I gave multiple examples of the way news organizations like the AP had been compromised by Hamas in Gaza. Contrary to what I’ve seen attributed to me today, I didn’t write that Hamas operated out of the same building, and don’t know if that’s true.

7:01 AM · May 16, 2021

The media citing Friedman typically omitted this. And I couldn’t help but notice that the media sharing his 2014 piece in *The Atlantic* accusing the AP of bias, and the piece itself failed to mention his own bias—his years of service in the IDF, and his “slightly rosier view of the IDF”, according to [The Times of Israel](#).

Now pause for just a moment to ponder how insane it is—even if all of Friedman’s disputed 2014 claims were true—to rely on an article written in 2014 by an IDF vet, who worked at AP in 2006-2011, to justify the IDF bombing Associated Press in 2021, for which the IDF itself provided no evidence to justify.

This is the following 2014 excerpt that made the media rounds after the 2021 bombing:

“The AP staff in Gaza City would witness a rocket launch right beside their office, endangering reporters and other civilians nearby—and the AP wouldn’t report it, not even in [AP articles](#) about Israeli claims that Hamas was launching rockets from residential areas. (This happened.) Hamas fighters would burst into the AP’s Gaza bureau and threaten the staff—and the AP wouldn’t report it. (This also happened.)

Cameramen waiting outside Shifa Hospital in Gaza City would film the arrival of civilian casualties and then, at a signal from an official, turn off their cameras when wounded and dead fighters came in, helping Hamas maintain the illusion that only civilians were dying. (This too happened; the information comes from multiple sources with firsthand knowledge of these incidents.)”

AP’s Director of Media Relations Paul Colford [said](#) Friedman’s story was “filled with distortions, half-truths and inaccuracies”, arguing that Israel challenged the AP with as many dangerous obstacles as Hamas and that AP covered both sides of the conflict.

[Friedman’s] arguments have been filled with distortions, half-truths and inaccuracies...

Like other media covering this story, we dealt with numerous obstacles, including Hamas intimidation, Israeli military censorship, anti-media incitement on both sides of the border, Hamas rocket fire and intense Israeli airstrikes that made it dangerous and difficult to get around Gaza during the fighting.

Courageous AP staffers worked around the clock in Gaza, often at the risk of great personal harm. Intense Israeli airstrikes literally shook the high-rise building housing the AP’s office. Two AP employees were ultimately killed in Gaza, and a third critically wounded and maimed. Our body of work included images and stories about Hamas rocket fire from civilian areas, the suffering of the residents of southern Israel living under the threat of rocket, mortar and tunnel-based attacks, Hamas’ summary executions of suspected collaborators, the fears of Gazans to criticize the group, Hamas’ use of civilian areas for cover and the devastation wreaked on Gazan civilians by Israeli airstrikes and artillery attacks.

Colford confirmed that armed militants entered AP’s offices in the early days of the 2008-2009 Gaza War to intimidate AP but said that AP did not give in to the intimidation.

Regarding a few specific issues that Mr. Friedman has raised most recently:

The AP published numerous photos and TV footage of rockets being launched from Gaza City. AP’s Josef Federman and Hamza Hendawi collaborated on an investigation into Hamas’ use of civilian areas for rocket launches, comparing maps obtained from Israeli military intelligence to facts on the ground.

In the early days of the war, armed militants entered the AP’s offices in Gaza to complain about a photo showing the location of a specific rocket launch. The AP immediately contacted Hamas, which insisted the men did not represent the group. The photo was not withdrawn and the men were never heard from again. Subsequent videos similarly showed rocket launches from within the urban area. Such intimidation is common in trouble spots. The AP does not report many interactions with militias, armies, thugs or governments. These incidents are part of the challenge of getting out the news — and generally not themselves news.

The Beacon’s “exclusive” was just the beginning. The “trust us we have secret evidence” disinformation campaign continued as the pro-Israel [media](#) eagerly forwarded another empty Israeli government claim, from a nameless “senior diplomatic source”, who told the Jerusalem Post of “[smoking gun](#)” evidence that Hamas was using the same Gaza building as AP.



“We showed [the US] the smoking gun proving Hamas worked out of that building,” a senior diplomatic source said. “I understand they found the explanation satisfactory.”

What evidence? Who exactly did they “show”? I guess we’ll never know!

If there’s a satisfactory explanation for why IDF bombed an American news agency, you’d think Israel and the US might want to make that known. But they haven’t.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated the claim of secret “smoking gun” evidence on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, saying, “We share with our American friends all that intelligence”.

Hmmm. Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken appear friendly...

But no, Blinken said he “had not seen any evidence”.

When asked the next day if he’d received any evidence, Blinken didn’t quite confirm receiving anything. He said, “Um...uh...it’s my understanding that uh, we’ve uh, uh received uh, some further information through, uh, uh intelligence channels.” The only thing he actually confirmed was that it’s “not something that [he] can comment on.”

WAPQ: Yesterday you said the US requested an explanation from Israel about its bombing of a high rise building containing U.S. and foreign media offices. Have you received anything? And what’s your assessment of that?

BLINKEN: Um. We uh. Did uh. Seek uh. Further information from, uh, Israel on this question. Uh, it’s my understanding that uh, we’ve uh, uh received uh, some further information through, uh, uh intelligence channels. And that’s not something that, that I can comment on.



[Click here to watch the video](#)

The following month, in June 2021, Israel’s Channel 12 news reported that IDF Lieutenant-General Aviv Kohavi said that the AP’s journalists drank coffee with Hamas each morning in

the building's cafeteria, whether they knew it or not. The AP called the comments "[patently false](#)", noting "there was not even a cafeteria in the building". Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz told AP that the IDF General was speaking figuratively. However, Gantz, like all the Israeli officials before him, offered AP [no evidence](#) to support IDF's bombing of the news agencies.

Gantz said Israel has shared its intelligence with the U.S. government. But he indicated that Israel has no intention of making the information public, saying it did not want to divulge its sources.

As usual, the propaganda was not limited to conservative media. The Democrat Party-aligned television network CNN platformed IDF Spokesperson, Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus. Asked, "Can you show us the evidence?" Conricus [replied](#), "That's in process, and I'm sure that, in due time, that information will be presented."

It's due time to come to grips with the reality that there is no evidence to justify the attack. Israel bombed an American news agency (with an [American bomb](#)), and the American government continues to cover for Israel and continues to fund continued death and destruction in Gaza.

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