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Shooting without a target

By Haaretz Editorial

During the final days of the war, when it became clear that the Israel Defense Forces had no solution to the ongoing launchings of Katyusha rockets, a decision was made to "flood" the area with cluster bombs, delivered by artillery shells and rockets. This was non-target specific shooting, based on the assumption that the bomblets would cover a large area, possibly destroy Hezbollah rocket launchers and cause as many casualties as possible among its fighters.

A soldier who fired 155mm artillery shells delivering cluster bombs told Haaretz that he was ordered to "flood" the area with these bombs, without having a specific target. A commander of a Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) told Haaretz that his order was to "saturate the area." These statements were published in stories by Meron Rappoport on September 8 and 12. More than a million cluster bomblets were dropped in southern Lebanon. Each M-26 rocket fired by an MLRS contains 644 cluster bomblets, capable of covering an area the size of a football field.

Firing at undefined targets is a problem in and of itself. The dilemma it entails is reflected in statements by soldiers who fired cluster bombs during training and recognized that this type of weapon should be used only in a war against a regular army, for the purpose of hitting arms supply convoys or missile batteries - not against civilian areas. But beyond this dilemma, the committee investigating the war should find out whether anyone considered what would happen to the thousands of cluster bomblets that failed to explode, and were therefore transformed into mines spread throughout southern Lebanon.

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The cluster bomb is not a banned weapon, but it is described as an "indiscriminate" weapon, which should not be used against targets in civilian areas because, inter alia, it continues to kill once the war is over. Since the cease-fire went into effect, 12 Lebanese civilians have been killed by duds that exploded unexpectedly. Since the percentage of unexploded cluster bomblets ranges from 5 to 30 percent, according to various assessments, southern Lebanon is now an area littered by thousands of bomblets that have not yet exploded.

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Questions regarding the IDF's conduct during the war have many implications, both moral and practical. Israel's ability to rally international support depends in part on the distinction it makes between innocent civilians and the enemy. While Hamas and Hezbollah attack civilians as part of their strategy, Israel declares that it does not do so, and that it makes an effort to avoid harming civilians. The decision to drop cluster bombs on villages, with no specified targets; the decision to use these bombs over a large area, making it impossible to know in advance who will be there; and the well-known fact that a large percentage of these munitions will not explode on impact, and will therefore be transformed into mines in an area to which civilians will return, are all further testimony to the flawed decision-making of those who managed the war.

Now, Israel can do little except accede to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's request and assist in marking the areas hit by the cluster bombs, so that there will be no further casualties among Lebanese civilians, who have already been hurt by the war. Significant portions of southern Lebanon have now become minefields. Annan's condemnation was not without basis.

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Interfaith convention attendees fear mounting inter-religious and inter-ethnic tension.



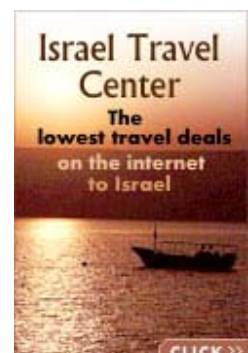
Budding rabbis

A trio of students ordained as rabbis in Germany for the first time since the Holocaust.

Talkback

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3.	IDF Most Moral Army in the World	10:37 Will.	14/09/06
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17.	Brave people	11:24 Mahj	14/09/06
18.	Stop using the word `terrorist` fpr Pals and Hezbolah in the	11:27 Mark B.	14/09/06
19.	Evil Monsters	11:27 Fletch	14/09/06
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21.	#20 Marilyn - YOU ARE MEAN	11:54 Muoaid-Iraqi in UAE	14/09/06
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23.	Mark B in Amsterdam	12:01 Laszlo Yarkony	14/09/06
24.	maral speak	12:04 thucydides	14/09/06
25.	IDF Cowards and killers	12:05 ralph	14/09/06
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31.	To Laszlo Yarkony in Israel	12:41 Mark B.	14/09/06



32.	C.WRIGHT.For somebody who has no problems with Hamas charter	12:45	PETER SM	14/09/06
33.	Maral: YOU Post Disinformation	12:55	Yishai Kohen	14/09/06
34.	maral cant help it .you provide cheap entertainment	12:59	thucydides	14/09/06
35.	peter sm 32	12:59	potaboc	14/09/06
36.	Yishai Kohen: total propaganda	13:12	Maral	14/09/06
37.	Thucydides can` t help himself	13:12	Maral	14/09/06
38.	potobac moral morally and moral	13:16	zadok the priest	14/09/06
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42.	israel and a series of arab revolts	13:35	lord acton	14/09/06
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