



Investigative Report: Walls Work – IRLI’s Tour of Israel’s Border Defenses

Key Takeaway: Walls work. President Donald Trump was right. If you don’t have a border, you don’t have a country. And the best way to re-establish and maintain the security of our southern border is to complete – and then extend – the border barrier mandated by Congress in the Secure Fence Acts. The fact is, those who claim border walls do not work are lying. Israel has six border walls – and they have reduced border incursions by more than 90 percent. One major difference between the United States and Israel, however, is that Israel’s governments – whether left-leaning, right-leaning, centrist or coalition – are firmly committed to maintaining the security of Israel’s borders. In America, many politicians, both Republican and Democrat, erroneously believe that porous borders create economic, social and cultural benefits for the United States.

INTRODUCTION



Flag of Israel Flying over Jerusalem - IRLI Photo

Recently, five IRLI team members toured Israel’s border defenses with guides from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and former Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and IRLI Senior Fellow Tom Homan. The purpose of our trip was to “evaluate Israel’s border walls and barriers in light of the border crisis in the United States.”

We visited Israel’s borders with: the Palestinian authority’s West Bank and Gaza territories; Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon; as well as the security wall in Jerusalem. And we had a first-hand opportunity to see how effectively constructed barriers stop the vast majority of unlawful crossings of Israel’s borders.

WHY IRLI CONDUCTED THIS INVESTIGATION

In 2016, presidential candidate Donald Trump stated that, if elected, he would build a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico. Immediately thereafter, naysayers began repeatedly proclaiming that, “Walls don’t work.”

- According to [Politico](#), “Put simply, walls do not work as permanent solutions to tough problems. Which is why, ultimately, they fall.”
- The [Cato Institute](#) claimed, “To put it most simply, border barriers will never stop illegal immigration, because a wall or fence cannot apprehend crossers.”
- And [Foreign Policy](#) opined, “History is adorned with famous walls, from the Sumerian Wall of Mardu 4,000 years ago onward, and the moments their defensive pretensions collapsed. The ruins today remind us that using a wall to prevent incursions is the oldest and weakest idea in the arsenal of the state—one reason why almost nobody has tried to make them work for the last thousand years.

Strangely, however, even as these claims were being made, *USA Today* noted that the number of physical border barriers expanded from seven to 77 between 1945 and 2018. That is a 1,000 percent increase. A reasonable observer might wonder why so many nations with border integrity concerns would choose to rely on walls if they are such an ineffective solution.

So, the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI) investigated and this is what we found: Walls do work and the barriers installed by Israel prove this conclusively.

A DEFINITIONAL NOTE

The vast majority of border barriers tend to fall into one of five types:

- Bollard Wall – A [bollard wall](#) consists of hollow steel posts, filled with concrete rebar. Posts are separated by a distance that is too small for a human being to pass through but large enough for border enforcement personnel to see through. Bollard walls provide a barrier that is impenetrable to border jumpers (when constructed in conjunction with anti-tunneling measures) but that still permits officers patrolling the border to observe activities on the far side of the wall, without the need for observation towers. Bollard walls are distinct from traditional bollards – short, squat metal posts used either to tie ships off to docks or to block vehicle access to a particular area. Technically, a bollard wall is a particularly strong type of fence.
- Levee Wall – A [levee wall](#) consists of reinforced concrete segments that are either set directly into the ground or set on top of a foundation that extends below ground. A levee wall may be further supported on one side by a banked earthen berm. This type of wall is the standard type used to top the banks for flood control levees (water diversion canals), hence the name “levee wall.” Levee walls are generally the most secure form of border barrier but they typically require observation towers, or surveillance cameras, to see over them.
- Mesh Fencing – A mesh fence, also known as “steel security fencing” or “[welded wire mesh](#),” is constructed from steel latticework. This type of fencing is commonly used on farms, as well as in correctional institutions. Mesh fencing is a cost-effective material for border barriers but, in order to be effective, it must be topped with razor wire, built upon an anti-tunneling foundation, and equipped with measures to counter penetration by motor vehicles. Typically, mesh fencing is used as part of a multi-layer, hybrid border barrier.
- Pedestrian Fencing – A pedestrian fence is intended to discourage individuals from simply walking across a border. It may consist of standard [chain link fence](#), lighter gauge metal mesh or [chicken wire](#). Pedestrian fencing has the virtue of being cheap and easy to construct. However, it is the easiest type of barrier for would-be illegal aliens to overcome. Usually, those seeking to defeat pedestrian fencing simply cut a hole in it with wire cutters. As such, pedestrian fencing is ineffective as a border barrier and more suited to use as a means of directing people from one location to another within a border inspection area.

In reality many of the 77 plus border barriers found in the world today are actually metal fences of varying types; barriers consisting of razor wire or barbed wire; or combinations of concrete wall/metal fencing. Some barriers are constructed of multiple layers – which may include any

combination of fencing, concrete wall, barbed wire or razor wire. In addition, many border barriers employ technical adjuncts such as cameras, sensors, pressure plates and audible alarms. For reasons that are not entirely clear, the universally accepted term for physical barriers placed along international boundary lines (even those which are actuality fences) is “border wall.”



Israel-Gaza border - IRLI Photo

In the interest of clarity, IRLI will observe this convention and refer to all of the Israeli barriers as “border walls,” even though many of them are technically enhanced fences.

HISTORIC BACKRGOUND

As nations go, Israel is both [new and ancient](#). In ancient times, what we now know as Israel consisted of two, united Jewish kingdoms known as Israel and Judah. Subsequently, at the end of the Iron Age, the region was repeatedly occupied by Egypt, the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Greek Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire. Finally, in May of 1948, Israel was re-established as a modern, independent [nation-state](#). Perhaps most importantly, Israel is the home state of the Jewish people.

Within its current borders, Israel consists of a [land mass](#) roughly the size of New Jersey. That land mass sits in a strategically significant position on the Mediterranean Sea. The Asian side of Turkey is a comparatively brief seaborne journey away from Israel; and Egypt, Sudan and Eritrea can be easily reached via a relatively short trip down the Gulf of Aqaba and across the Red Sea. As such, Israel sits at the crossroads of commerce between Europe, Asia Minor, the wider Middle East and North Africa.

ISRAEL IS A MAJOR MIGRANT DESTINATION COUNTRY

Although some people are surprised by this fact, each year Israel attracts large numbers of foreign nationals who wish to make a permanent home there. This happens for a number of reasons.

To begin with, Israel is the only true, Western-style democracy in the Middle East. It guarantees the [religious](#) and [civil rights](#) of non-Jewish minorities including Christians, Muslim, Druze, B’hai and others. Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, has members who are not Jewish. And there are political parties dedicated specifically to the interests of various minority groups, such as [Yisrael Beiteniu](#) (Russian-speakers) and [Ra’am](#) (Arabs and Negev Bedouin).

Israel's unqualified [economic success](#) is another reason why Israel is an attractive destination for both migrants and tourists. Within Israel, employment is abundant and wages are good. In fact, approximately [53,000](#) Palestinians enter Israel lawfully each day to engage in authorized employment, thousands more try to cross Israel's borders in order to work illegally.

As a result of its democratic government, economic opportunity and good quality of life, Israel is a preferred destination for migrants from across Asia Minor and Africa, as well as from all other parts of the world. And, as a migrant-receiving country, Israel's situation is, in many ways, comparable to that of the United States.

Unsurprisingly, that means that Israel must confront border security issues that also bear some remarkable similarities to those encountered by the United States:

- Much like the United States, several of Israel's national boundary lines lie in rough, inhospitable terrain.
- The West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon are all developing entities with unstable governments, which are in a number of ways comparable to the Latin American states to the south of the United States.
- [Hamas](#) and [Hezbollah](#) are both terrorist groups but they also operate as criminal cartels involved in everything from money laundering, to drug smuggling, to dealing in untaxed cigarettes and gasoline. In this sense, they are operationally similar to the criminal cartels that operate throughout Mexico, Central and South America.
- Like the United States, Israel is as concerned with the safety of migrants as it is with the safety of its own population – and it is common for Israelis to [rescue migrants](#) who have found themselves in dire straits.

Despite the fact that Israel's border walls are generally portrayed in the mainstream media as obstacles to invasion, the reality is that Israel's primary concern is prohibiting unlawful



Israel-Gaza border - IRLI Photo

migration – because terrorists, criminals and foreign intelligence operatives can, and will, insert themselves into migrant flows. These are concerns shared by the Department of Homeland Security with regard to America’s borders. Accordingly, the United States can draw many profitable lessons from Israel’s experiences in building, using and maintaining border walls.

ISRAEL’S NEIGHBORS

Like Israel, its neighbors are both ancient and modern. Their history as identifiable cultural entities dates back at least 5,000 – 6,000 years. But, like Israel, they were all, at one point or another, subsumed into giant empires and their history as modern nation-states is only slightly longer than that of Israel. According to *Wikipedia*, modern [Egypt](#) became an independent nation in 1922; [Syria](#) gained its independence in 1945; and both modern [Lebanon](#) and [Jordan](#) achieved their independence in 1946.

The [Palestinian Authority](#) was formed in 1994, with the finalization of the Oslo Accords. Initially, the Palestinian Authority exercised authority over both the West Bank territory and the Gaza Strip. These are distinct geographical enclaves separated by approximately [58 miles](#).

The West Bank is located between the eastern-central portion of Israel and the west-central segment of Jordan. The Jerusalem city line runs contiguous to the Israeli border with the West Bank territory. The Gaza Strip lies on the Mediterranean Sea bordering both Egypt and the southern portion of Israel.

In 2007, the Palestinian Authority lost control of the Gaza strip, effectively splitting the two territories into separate political entities. At present [Hamas](#) oversees the Gaza Strip, while the [Fatah](#)-led Palestinian Authority administers the West Bank.

Israel’s relationship with both the West Bank and Gaza strip are best characterized by each party’s migration policies. Border crossings from Israel into the West Bank and Gaza are marked by large signs indicating “The Entrance for Israeli Citizens is Forbidden, Dangerous to Your Lives and Is Against the Israeli Law.” While Israel maintains border checkpoints, in order to screen for terrorists, criminals and illegal migrants, it imposes no blanket prohibition on Palestinians entering Israel. And many Arabs and citizens of other Muslim countries [enter Israel](#) each year for tourism, study or business purposes.

Jordan shares approximately 350 miles of borderline with the northeastern and southeastern tiers of Israel. Roughly 50 miles of Jordan’s border with Israel is interrupted by the West Bank territory. Egypt shares about 206 miles of borderline along Israel’s southern boundary line. Around 7.5 miles of



Palestinian Authority Border Sign - IRLI Photo

Egypt's border with Israel is interrupted by the Gaza territory. Generally speaking, in recent years, Israel has enjoyed cordial interactions with Egypt and Jordan.

Technically, there is no agreed-upon border between Israel and Syria. However, the *de facto* border is approximately 80 miles long and runs along Israel's northeastern frontier. Syria and Israel are currently separated by a buffer zone occupied by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), a UN peacekeeping mission responsible for maintaining the ceasefire reached by Israel and Syria in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Relations with Syria have been more contentious than those with Jordan or Egypt, primarily because Syria has repeatedly attempted to regain the [Golan Heights](#), which it lost to Israel at the conclusion of the Six Day War.

To its north, the Lebanese border with Israel runs for approximately 49 miles. As with Syria, there is no agreed-upon border between Israel and Lebanon. The existing line of demarcation was set by the United Nations in 2000 and is referred to as "the Blue Line." It is monitored by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), a UN peacekeeping mission responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Blue Line. Due to ongoing civil war in Lebanon, as well as the continued presence of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorist group, [Israeli/Lebanese](#) relations have been strained for some time.

ISRAEL'S BORDER WALLS

The fundamental purpose of a border wall is to enable a country to control access to its territory. And physical barriers are used along national boundaries all over the world because they help improve the efficiency of border control operations in two primary ways: 1) They force all but the most determined would-be migrants to observe proper entry procedures by passing through security checkpoints; and 2) They act as a force multiplier by reducing the number of enforcement personnel necessary to secure a given segment of border.

Israel began constructing its first border wall around the Gaza strip in 1994. Although the initial version of the wall was simple compared to the structure in place today, it was so effective that Israel began to construct walls along its other borders.



Israeli border walls - IRLI Photo



At present, it has six physical barriers along its borders with Gaza, Egypt, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Gaza Border Wall

The Gaza Strip is wedged into the southwestern corner of Israel. It consists of a land mass on the edge of the Negev Desert that is roughly twice the size of Washington, DC. It borders the Mediterranean Sea on its western side. To the north and east, it shares a border with Israel. To the south it is bordered by Egypt.

In terms of climate and topography, the Gaza strip is similar to the Baja California peninsula – hot, rocky, with scrubby plant growth. The rugged, arid desert territory eventually gives way to the Mediterranean Coast.

A border wall runs along the entire border between Israel and the [Gaza strip](#). The [Times of Israel](#) describes it as “a wall of iron, sensors and concrete,” which, “is meant to end the threat of cross-border attack tunnels.” These tunnels have been used to move people and contraband into Israel, as well as to move consumer goods and other commodities out of Israel.

The Gaza Border Wall is approximately 40 miles long and consists primarily of levee wall, constructed of individual concrete panels joined together to form a wall. The barrier also includes metal mesh fencing, strung between steel posts, topped with razor wire.

The above-ground wall and fencing are approximately 20-30 feet high, in order to discourage people from attempting to scale them. The underground portions, which go roughly 16 feet deep are intended to discourage efforts to tunnel underneath the surface-level barriers.

Both wall and fence segments are equipped with cameras and smart electronic sensors. The underground segments of the wall are equipped with seismic and fiber optic sensors that can detect subterranean excavation. Control rooms, where sensors are monitored, and observation towers have been intermittently placed along the barrier. A patrol road runs along the entire barrier so that Israel’s police and defense forces may conduct physical surveillance.

The Gaza Border Wall has been so effective that Israel extended it and Egypt has copied it on its side of the border:

- Based on the success of the Gaza wall, Israel constructed an additional 2 miles of walls to enclose roads that run along the border with Gaza. According to [Siasat Daily](#), “militants in Gaza often fire rockets and gunfire at Israel’s southern communities.” The additional walls prohibit terrorists and criminal gangs from firing on the residents of these towns as they drive from one location to another.
- The Gaza Border Wall runs to the Mediterranean Sea. Israel later [extended](#) the barrier 650 feet into the sea in an attempt to prohibit small-scale maritime incursions into its territory.
- Israel’s border wall triumphs prompted Egypt to build a barrier on its own border with Gaza. Initially, [Egypt](#) installed a large stone wall that extends well below ground in order

to discourage the construction of cross-border tunneling. Later, the stone wall was topped with a 20-foot tall [levee wall](#) constructed of concrete slats. The Egyptian barrier runs for approximately 7.5 miles along the entirety of Egypt's boundary line with Gaza.

According to the [Jewish Virtual Library](#), since the completion of the Gaza Border Wall, “not a single suicide bomber has managed to cross Israel's border with Gaza.”



Gaza Border Wall - IRLI Photo

Egypt Border Wall

In terms of terrain, migration patterns and border security issues, Israel's border with Egypt is, perhaps, most comparable to America's southern border with Mexico.

IRLI team members visited the Israel-Egypt border, which runs through the heart of the Negev desert, in the Eshkol Regional Council, off Highway 10. This is sandy, harsh terrain studded with desert scrub brush and notably bereft of drinking water. It is stunningly similar to the topography found in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border. On the day that IRLI's team visited, temperatures hovered between 100°F – 110°F and desert mirages shimmered along the horizon. It is also a remote, relatively sparsely populated area.

For decades, African migrants were attracted to the Israeli-Egyptian boundary line in the same way that the U.S.-Mexico border draws migrants from Central and South America. Would-be refugees and economic migrants from further south in Africa – primarily Ethiopia and Eritrea – engaged the services of [Bedouin criminal gangs](#) to smuggle them across the Negev and into Israel.

In order to prohibit the smuggling of illegal aliens over its border with Egypt, Israel completed its longest border wall in December of 2013. It is approximately 150 miles long. The majority of the barrier is constructed of metal mesh fencing, strung between steel posts, and topped with razor wire. It is a smart fence equipped with sensors and cameras. All along the barrier are observation towers, control rooms, IDF bases and a network of patrol roads.

Members of the IDF told IRLI during our tour: About 9,500 Africans entered Israel unlawfully via the border with Egypt in the first six months of 2013. However, only 43 migrants made it across once the border wall was completed. These statistics are consistent with those reported by the Israeli government and press:

- Numbers released by the Israeli Ministry of the Interior, and cited in the [*Harvard International Review*](#), indicated approximately 17,000 African migrants crossed the border with Egypt and entered Israel illegally in 2011. After the border wall was completed that number plummeted to 43.
- Similarly, in 2018, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that, “Whereas about 9,500 Africans crossed into Israel illegally in the first six months of 2012, less than three dozen did so in the first six months of 2013, at which time the major components of the barrier had been completed. Illegal immigration through Sinai dropped to 11 cases in 2016 and 0 in 2017 [after the barrier was finished]. The fence also has dramatically reduced the smuggling of contraband into Israel and there have been no security breaches from Sinai since then.”



Israel's Border Wall With Egypt – IRLI Photo

Egypt was an active participant in the implementation of security measures along the border with Israel. Accordingly, there are sensors on the Egyptian side of the border as well. Israel can detect people approaching the wall when they are still several kilometers away.

West Bank Border Wall (Also Known as The Jerusalem Separation Wall)

Jerusalem is Israel's national capital and the seat of its national government. In terms of both history and international stature, Jerusalem is comparable to Washington, DC, London or Paris.

Since the conclusion of the 1967 Six Day War, Jerusalem has been entirely within the borders of Israel.

However, portions of the city line are contiguous with the border between Israel and the Palestinian Authority's West Bank territory.

That means that Israel's capital city sits directly on its border with a foreign entity that is economically unstable and in the hands of a volatile government.

Consider, if you will, how the security circumstances in Washington might differ if the District of Columbia sat directly on the U.S.-Mexico border? This is exactly the volatile state of security affairs that Israel was forced to deal with from 1967 onward. In 2002, in response to the terror attacks and increases in crime that accompanied the Second Intifada, Israel began constructing the West Bank Border wall. It is a meandering structure that is approximately 435 miles long. And, according to the [Jerusalem Post](#) the West Bank Border Wall, "effectively ended the phenomenon of suicide bombings."

The primary architect of the wall was IDF Colonel [Danny Tirza](#), head of the Strategic Planning Unit of the Judea and Samaria Division in the IDF's central command from 1994-2007. Col. Tirza was one of our guides when IRLI toured Israel's border facilities.

Prior to the installation of the barrier, Jerusalem and many of the surrounding Israeli and Arab villages blended into each other with no obvious way to distinguish one from another. This type of urban/suburban intermingling will be familiar to anyone who is acquainted with New York City, Boston or Philadelphia. In order to minimize the impact on local communities, Israel attempted to install the least disruptive barrier possible. Therefore, only about five percent of the West Bank Border Wall – primarily the portions located in urban areas of Jerusalem and nearby towns – is composed of 30-foot sections of concrete levee wall. This is because it generally takes less space to install levee wall than multiple layers of fence.



Jerusalem at dawn – IRLI Photo

Levee walls are usually placed on an anti-tunneling foundation that may go as many as thirty feet, or more, underground. While mesh fencing barriers can be installed on an anti-tunneling footing, they can also simply be built wide enough to make tunneling extremely difficult. When sufficient space is available, this is a major advantage because it requires significantly less

excavation. A reduced amount of digging, in turn, means less of a need to re-route the multiple water, sewage and electrical conduits that are typically found underground in populated areas.

The remaining 95 percent of the West Bank Wall consists of mesh fencing, strung between steel posts, topped with razor wire. Some segments of the barrier consist of multiple layers of barbed wire fencing, ditches and a metal mesh fencing. The entire structure is supported by sensors, surveillance cameras, observation towers and an extensive network of patrol roads.

According to Col. Tirza, as quoted in the [Jerusalem Post](#), “There were more than 3,000 attacks that originated from Judea and Samaria from September 2000 until the end of 2006 that resulted in the deaths of 1,622 people killed inside the Green Line in terrorist attacks. From 2007, when most of the existing fence was up, until today, there have been 141 attacks from Judea and Samaria inside Israel, that led to the killing of some 100 people.” Col. Tirza personally confirmed these numbers to IRLI team members.

Moreover, as the [Jewish Virtual Library](#) has pointed out:

“Israelis living along the Green Line, both Jews and Arabs, favor the fence to prevent infiltration by suicide bombers, thieves, and vandals. The fence has caused a revolution in the daily life of some Israeli Arab towns because it has brought quiet, which has allowed a significant upsurge in economic activity. The Palestinians in the territories will also benefit from the fence because it will reduce the need for Israeli military operations in the territories and the deployment of troops in Palestinian towns. Onerous security measures, such as curfews and checkpoints, will either be unnecessary or dramatically scaled back.”



West bank border wall – IRLI Photo



Lebanon Border Wall

Israel's border with Lebanon is marked by sharp transitions between lowlands and highlands. The terrain ranges from steep mountainsides, to deep valleys, to relatively flat plains, with wadis and rocky canyons in between.



Lebanon Border - IRLI Photo

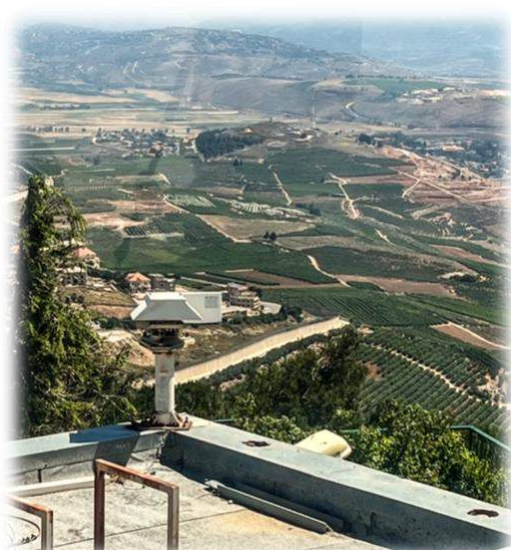
At one point, the boundary line runs along the narrow 2,300-foot ridge that separates the Galilee Panhandle from the Golan Heights. The topography puts one in mind of the hilly country between San Francisco and Sacramento in California.

Israel is in the process of building an 81-mile wall along its border with Lebanon. Approximately nine miles have been completed. The majority of the barrier is concrete levee wall. In many places, the wall is topped with steel mesh fencing set at an angle to discourage attempts to climb over the wall. The entire barrier is equipped with sensors and surveillance cameras. Where concrete wall cannot be erected, steel mesh fencing is strung between steel posts. A patrol road closely follows the barrier and like Israel's other border walls, there is an assortment of control rooms and observation points.

The primary purpose of the Israel-Lebanon border wall is to frustrate the criminal and terrorist activities of Hezbollah. While Hezbollah is primarily an Iranian-backed terror organization, it finances many of its operations through profits obtained through criminal enterprises. According to *Prism*, the journal of the National Defense University, “Make no mistake: Hezbollah operates as a transnational and transregional criminal organization.... Hezbollah is deeply involved in criminal enterprises, including running illicit networks of its own and plugging into those of other criminal entities.”



Briefing with the northern command civilian liaison - IRLI Photo



Overlook of the town of Odaisseh - IRLI Photo

IRLI team members visited the Misgav Am kibbutz which sits directly on the border with Lebanon, overlooking the Lebanese town of Odaisseh. The development deals with many of the same issues as American towns that sit on the U.S.-Mexico border: attempting to engage in normal life activities under the prying eyes of a transnational crime cartel/terror organization that may, at any time, engage in acts of violence to achieve its objectives.

And the similarities do not stop with the day-to-day plight of border residents. Just as the [U.S. Border Patrol](#) must remain on the lookout for cross-border tunnels excavated by south-of-the-border drug cartels, Israel must watch out for cross-border tunnels. Hamas has long bored [tunnels](#) under the Israel-Gaza border, where the terrain is marked by loose, sandy soil. Tunnels were less common in the rough, rocky terrain along the border with Lebanon. However, the IDF has increasingly encountered sophisticated tunnels leading from Lebanon



Hezbollah tunnel - IRLI Photo

into Israel. IDF members took IRLI team members on a tour of a [Hezbollah tunnel](#) discovered near the town of Zarit. The tunnel was carved out of limestone using concrete core drill bits of the type available at most hardware stores and it took the builders five years to complete. All told, the tunnel was a mile long and 265 feet deep. And the builders were not playing around. It was clear they intended to build a permanent facility that could be used over and over again. They carved a staircase directly into the stone, outfitted it with metal railings and rigged the entire tunnel with electric lighting and telephone equipment. Descending into this dank hole in the ground, it became impossible not to recognize that, if not deterred, cross-border criminals will go to absurd lengths to achieve their objectives.

Hezbollah tunnel - IRLI Photo

Along with its efforts to build the Lebanon border wall, the IDF [launched operations](#) to detect and destroy Hezbollah cross-border tunnels. Although no formal statistics have been published, the Lebanon Border Wall, in conjunction with anti-tunneling programs, appears to have significantly reduced Hezbollah's ability to infiltrate Israeli territory.



Syria/Golan Border Wall

In 2013, Israel began erecting a 16-foot border wall along its [frontier with Syria](#). This project was spurred by growing concerns regarding potential fallout from the civil war then taking place in that country.

Similar to the wall along the border with Egypt, the fence is approximately 16 feet high and constructed of metal mesh fencing, strung between steel posts and topped with razor wire. As with Israel's other border walls, this one is supported by cameras, sensors, observation points and a patrol road. The Syrian border wall is approximately 45 miles long.

The Israeli border with Syria is the least similar to the U.S.-Mexico border. While Israel remains concerned about the spillover of both crime and terrorism, the IDF's primary concern with regard to the Syrian border is a full-scale incursion into Israeli territory by the armed forces of Syria or Iran. While the United States does not share



View Into Syria from Israel - IRLI Photo

similar concerns in connection with its southern border, Mexico has, over the past five decades, inched consistently closer to becoming a failed state. Accordingly, American border security officials should begin taking seriously the possibility that the United States may, in the near future, have to consider a southern border incursion by foreign military forces.



View Into Syria from Israel - IRLI Photo

Jordan Border Wall

In 2015, the Israeli government approved the construction of a border wall with Jordan, due to fears that terrorists from ISIS or other jihadist groups would infiltrate the country over the largely undefended border with Jordan. Thereafter, approximately 19 miles of high-tech “smart fence” similar to that built along the Egyptian and Syrian borders was constructed along the boundary line with Jordan. However, because of Israel’s good relationship with Jordan,



Near Jordanian Border - IRLI Photo

and the destruction of ISIS by U.S. President Donald Trump, the remainder of the border with Jordan was left unfenced. There are no current plans to build a barrier along the remainder of the border with Jordan.

BORDER CROSSINGS

As the 45th President of the United States, Donald J. Trump famously observed, if you don't have a border, you don't have a country. But borders aren't entirely about keeping people out.

Israel's border walls force migrants to seek admission at recognized ports-of-entry. And to accommodate those who wish to enter Israel to engage in tourism or economic activity, the Israeli government has invested heavily in building state-of-the-art border crossings. In short, there is an effort to balance public safety/national security interests with economic and social interests.

The [Crossing Points Authority](#) (CPA), part of the Israeli Ministry of Defense, is responsible for managing crossing ports of entry at the West Bank and Gaza borders. The remainder of Israel's border checkpoints are managed by the IDF, which includes the Israel Border Police (known by the Hebrew acronym "MAGAV).

The IRLI team was able to visit three border crossings:

- Qualandia – On the border with the West Bank.
- Checkpoint Elijah – On the border with the West Bank.
- Kerem Shalom – On the border with the Gaza Strip.



Kerem Shalom Crossing Point - IRLI Photo

All of the border crossing points that we observed used state-of-the-art technology, along with highly trained personnel, in order to prevent weapons, contraband, terrorists and illegal workers from entering Israel. At the same time, however, the CPA places a strong emphasis on making its vetting and inspections processes as minimally intrusive as possible, in order to promote harmony with its neighbors.



According to [Reuters](#), “About 200,000 Palestinians cross each day into Israel or Jewish settlements for work, earning on average more than twice as much as those employed by Palestinian state bodies and businesses.” And, as IRLI team members witnessed, those Palestinians are efficiently and respectfully moved through border crossing points as they make their way into Israel. The type of chaos that currently prevails on the southern border of the United States was simply nowhere to be found.

However, the lack of chaos at Israeli border crossings is a direct result of Israel’s border walls. The virtually impenetrable barriers along Israel’s national boundary lines force would-be migrants to appear, in an orderly fashion, at ports-of-entry and seek lawful admission in accordance with standard procedures. When border officials are not forced to run helter-skelter chasing down illegal aliens and smugglers, they have time to conduct proper background checks and make informed decisions about who to admit and who to turn around. Moreover, an organized and safe immigration inspection process allows disqualified migrants to be denied admission and turned around in a controlled environment – making the process safer both for border enforcement personnel and for applicants seeking admission.

However, the CPA is only able to fulfill its mission as effectively as it does because Israel has border walls. When deployed correctly, border walls, smart sensors, border patrol personnel and immigration/customs inspectors are all part of a border control system, where each piece is dependent upon the other. Keeping the bad guys out and letting the good guys in are flip sides of the same coin.

CONCLUSION

According to [YnetNews.com](#), “Over the past 17 years, Israel has spent NIS 6 billion on building and improving border fences along the Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese and Gazan borders.” Nevertheless, it is impossible to assign a cash value to a human life. And the benefits that Israel has gained from its border walls are absolutely priceless:

- The West Bank Border Wall resulted in a 95 percent reduction in terrorist attacks and a 94 percent reduction in the number of people killed as a result of terrorist attacks.
- The Egypt Border Wall reduced illegal migration from the Sinai Peninsula into Israel by 99 percent.
- The Gaza Border Wall resulted in a 100 percent reduction in suicide bomb attacks.
- The Lebanon, Jordan and Golan Border Walls appear to have significantly reduced infiltrations of Israeli territory by terrorist and criminal groups.

American leaders should follow Israel’s example and secure our border with Mexico by constructing a border wall. A physical barrier on the southern border is a necessity if our government wishes to meet its obligation to protect the sovereignty and security of the United States of America. Besides helping stem the tide of illegal immigration, it would also limit the ability of drug cartels, human traffickers, terrorists and other national security threats to access

the United States from Mexico and the rest of Central and South America. And like Israel, the U.S. would gain immeasurable benefits from a border wall.

The fact is walls work. That is exactly why sage rulers have been building them for millennia. And that is also why the U.S. Congress has twice directed the construction of a physical barrier on the southern border – twice. First in 1996 as part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and a second time with the Secure Fence Act of 2006. However, until President Trump took office, no presidential administration engaged in any meaningful attempts to comply with either piece of legislation.



Knesset, Israel - IRLI Photo

Finally, Israel's experience proves that the naysayers have no idea what they are talking about. Israel is effectively surrounded by border walls. And, while it has definitely become safer, it has become no less democratic and no less welcoming to either short-term visitors or long-term migrants.