WHEN PRECISION IS NOT ENOUGH
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Advanced sensor and precision guidance technologies have changed dramatically the
capability of NATO forces and other Western militaries to strike designated targets.
Emphasis has been given to development of munitions that limit collateral damage. Yet,
with all of these technological advances, other factors play an overriding role in
influencing world opinion, and even in determining what constitutes winning a given
conflict.

The 2006 conflict between Israel and Lebanon offer specific examples. In one instance
there was irrefutable evidence that Hezbollah was launching missile towards Israel from
the immediate vicinity of a specific building in Qana. The Israeli military responded,
striking the build that than collapsed. While Israel reported they believed the building to
be unoccupied, in fact, there were many people seeking shelter including a substantial
number of children. As a result, the press portrayed Israel as the aggressor and at fault for
destroying this legitimate target. This proved that to satisfy external sources, precision
was insufficient and omniscience would have been necessary.

There were other instances in which Hezbollah used innocent civilians and even UN
forces as cover for their attacks. Canadian soldiers were killed by counter-fire from
Israeli guns. Before that attack that had complained about Hezbollah hugging their
positions and to launch missiles.

Elsewhere in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) there have been situations in which
attacks against “high value targets” have killed innocent civilians. Both Afghanistan and
Pakistan have numerous tales of such strikes as terrorists commingle with innocent
civilians.

While sensors and intelligence systems constantly improve, it is highly unlikely that the
level of detail necessary to obtain perfect knowledge of battlefield conditions will be
achieved. The role of the media continues to increase in shaping world opinion.
Unfortunately, much of what is reported is either wrong or grossly distorted. Since
neither self-correction of the media, nor omniscience is possible, it is therefore incumbent
on the military to make an extra effort to limit collateral casualties. That effort can and
should include rapid development of area effect non-lethal weapons.