[Former British Commander Kemp Says Mix-Up Cost Him UN Gaza War Commission Appointment](http://www.algemeiner.com/2015/06/30/former-british-commander-kemp-says-mix-up-cost-him-un-gaza-war-commission-appointment/" \o "Permanent Link to Former British Commander Kemp Says Mix-Up Cost Him UN Gaza War Commission Appointment)

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The U.N. Human Rights Council approached the former commander of British troops in Afghanistan to join the panel for investigating the 2014 Gaza war, but his appointment never materialized.

“I was approached by the president’s office of the UNHRC and asked if I would take part in this commission and I agreed to,” explained Col. Richard Kemp during a debate at the U.N. on Monday over its recent report condemning potential war crimes by Israel and terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip including Hamas, during last summer’s 50-day Operation Protective Edge.

“I then was told I’d be hearing back soon confirmation. I heard no more, but subsequently I was told, by other sources, I had refused the appointment,” he said, adding that the mix-up was “obviously, unintentional confusion.”

Kemp’s appointment was meant to balance a panel that critics have said was biased against Israel and the Israel Defense Force’s actions during Operation Protective Edge, after high-profile British lawyer Amal Clooney declined the U.N.’s offer to join the commission.

Kemp read from the preliminary findings of the High Level International Military Group, which included five former chiefs of staff from major armies worldwide, that “none of us is aware of any army that takes such extensive measures as did the IDF last summer to protect the lives of the civilian population in such circumstances.”

Kemp — who was present in Israel during the entire 2014 Gaza conflict and was a part of the high-level fact-finding mission (“I was the lowest level of the high level group,” he said)  — commended the IDF for practicing the restraint not to carry out “attacks against confirmed Hamas targets when they knew that civilians were present, even to the extent that Israeli Defense Forces restraint on attacking targets resulted in the deaths of Israeli citizens during that conflict.”

He also slammed Hamas, saying the group “did more to deliberately and systematically inflict death suffering and destruction on its own civilian population, including children, than any other terrorist group in history.”

He said Hamas sought to cause large numbers of casualties among their own people to bring about international condemnation, especially by the U.N.

By “denying this truth, this report faithfully reiterates Hamas’ own forces narrative,” he said.

Also speaking at Monday’s debate was U.S. Maj. Gen. Michael Jones, the former chief of staff of U.S. central command, who participated in the JINSA Task Force on the Gaza Conflict, a separate report on the 2014 operation.

He warned that the Gaza war provided further evidence that non-state actors have increasingly gained the military capabilities available typically to states alone: a standing army that is well trained and well equipped and that operates on a doctrine both published and promulgated, and contains specialized organizations for intelligence-gathering and logistics.

Jones like Kemp and others on Monday harangued Hamas, saying the group “habitually violated international law,” through indiscriminate rocket fire and storing weapons in places with a civilian presence, “without military necessity.”

He challenged the conception that storing weapons near civilian homes or institutions is necessary by Hamas and other groups because of Gaza’s high population density, saying there are certainly areas where weapons could be stored, or even launched, “that are not next to a U.N. compound.”

Lt. Col. Geoffrey S. Corn, the Presidential Research Professor of Law at the South Texas College of Law, noted Hamas’ flagrant violation of the rules of engagement, such as not requiring its fighters to wear identifying markers, such as a uniform, making many fighters virtually indistinguishable from the general population.

He said Hamas went out of its way to fly in the face of the rules of engagement to complicate Israeli attacks, making it more likely that the IDF would cause civilian casualties thus bolstering Hamas’ standing internationally.

He also derided the U.N. commission for failing to integrate the testimonies and opinions of any military experts, save one unidentified source.

He also warned that relying on the consequences of the Gaza operation, such as bombed houses or civil institutions, rather than attempting to perceive IDF actions within the context of a live battlefield, would embolden Hamas but vindicating the group’s tactics.

The Human Rights Council is set to vote on adopting the report, at which point it would be sent to an international organization such as the U.N. General Assembly, the Security Council or the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Israel — which refused to cooperate with the commission on its investigation — has called on members of the UNHRC to oppose the report or refrain from voting on it.