



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on June 8, 2010

The Dangers of Pasta in Gaza

Watch and listen to enough TV news shows and you develop a growing awareness and appreciation for the dangers of pasta. No, I'm not talking about danger to the heart, or an elevated cholesterol level or even an expanded waistline. I mean pasta is regarded in some quarters as a weapon for terrorists.



If you missed that news, as I did, when it came up on ABC's *This Week* program on Sunday morning, June 6, you can read it in the [transcript](#). Jake Tapper of ABC News was questioning Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) about the recent Israeli raid on a flotilla said to be bringing humanitarian supplies to the residents of Israeli-blockaded Gaza. Kerry defended Israel's boarding of a Turkish ship in international waters, an episode that escalated into a deadly confrontation.

"Israel has every right in the world to make certain that weapons are not being smuggled in after the thousands of rockets that have been fixed on it from Gaza," he said. Tapper then asked about contraband items.

Tapper: You were in Gaza in 2009. You found they could not even bring pasta into Gaza. It was on a list of prohibited items. You went to the Israelis and said, what gives? They — I think they bent on that and allowed pasta in. What is the situation in Gaza that the Israelis won't let pasta in?

Kerry: There are still some items — there's confusion in the process. I've talked to defense minister Ehud Barak about this. I believe that Israel is working now to try to put together — and we need to work with them to make this happen. We need to guarantee that the supplies for building can get in to Gaza for reconstruction, but they are not going to be used by Hamas either to build rockets or bunkers or to augment Hamas's position in Gaza.

I'm glad Sen. Kerry cleared that up. But I'm still not sure whether pasta is currently permitted in Gaza for building and reconstruction or is banned for its potential use in the building of rockets and bunkers. People who build rockets and bunkers have to eat, after all, and one of the things they might eat is pasta.

Among the items the Israeli Defense Forces claim to have recovered from its raid on the flotilla were bullet proof vests, pepper spray, some kitchen knives, a Saudi flag, some CD ROMs, an electric saw and some night vision equipment that might be useful to travelers on the high seas. Pasta may or may not have been included among the tons of supplies the flotilla organizers said they were trying to bring to the Gaza residents. So might jam, chocolate, fruit juice and clothing, all of which are among the imports currently banned.



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The prohibition on exports is even more severe. According to the web site FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting), "Israel bans virtually all exports from Gaza, a policy that has helped to destroy the Strip's agriculture, contributed to the closing of some 95 percent of its factories, and left more 80 percent of its population dependent on food aid. It's why Gaza's fishermen are not allowed to travel more than three miles from the coast, which dramatically reduces their catch."

Fish, like pasta, is useful for nourishment but would be poor ammunition for rocket fire. Israel, like any other nation, has a right to defend itself from attack. But it seems clear its blockade of Gaza is also designed to keep the residents there in dire poverty, perhaps in the hope of making them miserable enough to overthrow the Hamas government they elected in 2006. The elections, it is worth recalling, were pushed by the Bush administration, which was no doubt anticipating a different outcome. So much for the neocon notion that if we can only succeed in spreading democracy in the Middle East, the people there will elect governments that promote peace and prosperity, to our and Israel's advantage.

Governing the entire world is a goal that has thus far eluded the sages in Washington and other capitals of the world, but it does not deter them from trying. "I think what we need to do in the days ahead," said Kerry, "is put out a list of the things that cannot go in (to Gaza) and have a clarity for those groups trying to get things in as to what can go in and get back the movement and access cooperation that existed previously and, where we really have a better flow of goods." Note the use of the first person plural — "we" must work with Israel to have a better blockade. Perhaps it might even be, to borrow a phrase from the first President Bush, a "kinder, gentler" blockade that will permit the people in Gaza a little less misery and a little more pasta. Among the duties inherent in ruling the world is the responsibility of the United States to oversee and stand behind the blockade of Gaza — and to be surprised when that contributes to even more hatred of America in the Arab world.

The residents of Gaza are not the only people being held hostage by the special relationship between the United States and Israel. "There is absolutely no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to Israel's security," Vice President Joe Biden has said. Sometimes we might wonder if the people we elect know what people they supposedly work for and what nation they represent.



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