

# Flotilla should stay docked

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It's possible some of the people taking part on the blockade-busting flotilla to Gaza believe that theirs is a humanitarian gesture.

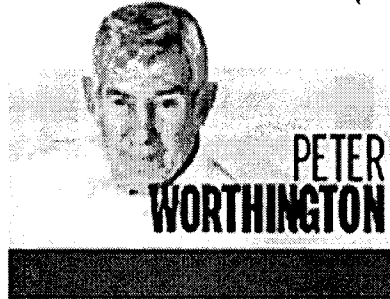
But most of those on the flotilla, presently stymied by Greek authorities from challenging the Israeli blockade of Gaza, are aware that theirs is a political attempt to break the blockade and shame Israel.

Last year around this time, Israeli commandos assaulted a Turkish flotilla, and killed nine activists on a cruise ship. The resulting international furor both embarrassed and irritated Israel, which sees Gaza as a haven for Hamas terrorists, whose stated goal is the annihilation of Israel.

This year's effort — Freedom Flotilla II, consisting of about 10 ships, including freighters — is pledged to non-violence, with no weapons on board. Its aim is to further embarrass Israel on the pretence the flotilla is helping Gaza with medical and humanitarian aid.

The Greek Coast Guard has foiled the Canadian ship *Tahrir* (*Liberation*) and other boats that left Greek ports for Gaza. The *Tahrir* was boarded and towed back to Crete, likely ending the adventure for some 40 Canadians, Australians and European supporters.

Lucky for them, perhaps, since Israelis might not be so gentle. University of West-



ern Ontario professor David Heap, one of the organizers, is widely quoted as expressing dismay at the Greek government of George Papandreou for interfering on Israel's behalf.

There is some irony in the situation. Heap is the son of longtime leftist Toronto politician Dan Heap, proving the apple doesn't fall far from the tree; Papandreou is the son of former PM Andreas Papandreou, who seemed to revere everything that was left-wing — certainly when he was a University of Toronto professor.

As a two-time prime minister of Greece, Andreas was more sensible and realistic than when he was a professor in exile — qualities his son seems to have inherited.

Unlike David Heap and the (un)happy travellers on the *Tahrir*, Greece has to live in the volatile Mideast and deal with Israel and Palestinians and the threat of terrorism.

It's not humanitarian aid reaching Gaza that concerns the Israelis — it's weapons and rockets to be used to har-

ass Israeli settlements. Without the blockade, it's virtually a given that even more weapons would reach Hamas.

*The Toronto Star* has provided friendly coverage of the Canadian ship and Flotilla II's misadventures.

Not so the *London Free Press*, which apparently has been giving short shrift to a protest organized by former UN peacekeeper Mark Vandermaas outside a London, Ont., mosque.

Vandermaas' claims that the mosque raised funds for the blockade-busting Canadian boat, and included a delegate aboard the boat, are refuted by Adeeb Hassan, chairman of the London mosque's board of directors.

Hassan says the mosque wasn't involved in a fundraising dinner in its gymnasium — that it just rented the premises to the promoters. And the mosque's ex-operations manager, Muhammed Hamou, is on the *Tahrir* on his own, and not representing the mosque.

Fair enough. This was reported in the weekly *Jewish Tribune*.

Vandermaas' vigil of almost two weeks has gained some support, but has largely been ignored. Thanks to the Greek Coast Guard, perhaps the *Tahrir's* voyage is now over and Vandermaas can remove his blue beret and prepare for his next cause.