Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the
Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

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# The suicide bombing attack at the Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip: another example of the Palestinian terrorist organizations' attempts to perpetrate suicide bombing attacks at civilian sites vital to the welfare of the entire Palestinian population. That was done to sabotage successful manifestations of Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation and political coexistence.

- On January 14, 2004, at the Erez industrial park crossing in the Gaza Strip a young Gazan mother of 2 blew herself up, killing 4 Israelis: 2 soldiers, a border guard and a civilian. Both **Hamas** and **Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades** , the Fatah military wing, assumed responsibility for the attack. It is important to note that it was the first time **Hamas** used a **woman to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack** . The crossing itself was severely damaged and not only will a new one have to be built, but a temporary arrangement for the workers entering the area will have to be found.

- The Erez complex including the site of the suicide bombing attack and the industrial part is of **great importance for the welfare of the Gaza Strip's civilian population** for the following reasons:
  - The **Erez industrial park** employs **4,900** Gazan workers who are the sole support of approximately **30,000 immediate family members** and untold thousands more. They work in factories owned by Israelis, Palestinians and those owned jointly by both sides.
  - The **Erez crossing** , which is part of the complex, is a **lifeline** for the Gazan population; **12,000 of the workers** who leave the Strip daily **to work** in Israel pass through it; **4,000 through it; 4,000 merchants and small business owners hold entrance permits** .

- **The Erez complex (industrial park and crossing)** is a thorn in the side of the Palestinian terrorist organizations, i.e., **Fatah** (headed by Yassir Arafat), **Hamas** and the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** . In the first place, it serves as a **symbol** and a **model** for **possible Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation and political coexistence** , even during the current violent confrontation. In the second, **by using a suicide bombing attack detrimental to Palestinian welfare and presenting Israel as responsible for Palestinian suffering, the Palestinian terrorist organizations have long been trying to weaken Israel's position and image in the international community and even instigate internal Israeli criticism** . Therefore, the terrorist organizations have frequently tried to perpetrate suicide bombing attacks at various sites in the Erez complex to disrupt the activities taking place there and to damage the delicate fabric of Israeli-Palestinian peaceful interaction. (For an aerial photograph of the Erez complex and details of suicide bombing attack attempts during 2003, see **Appendix A** .)

- In addition, attacks at the Erez complex are **part of Palestinian terrorist organization policy** , whose aim is to sabotage the activities taking place at similar sites in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank which serve the civilian Palestinian population. The Palestinian Authority (PA), which has a commitment to the welfare of its civilian population, **avoids taking effective steps to frustrate those terrorist activities as part of its overall avoidance of frustrating all forms of terrorism** . Thus, the PA enables the terrorist organizations not only to **continue** but to **escalate** their activities, as manifested by the latest suicide bombing attack at the Erez crossing.

Reem Salah Awad al-Rayishi, the female suicide bomber.
Source: Y-Net [the internet site of the Israeli Hebrew daily newspaper Yedioth Aharonoth].

**Note** : The female suicide bomber, mother of 2 small children, lived with her family in the Gazan neighborhood called Al-Zeitun. She arrived at the crossing limping and in tears, and triggered the metal detector when she passed through it. She claimed she had a medical problem and that the metal pin implanted in her leg had set off the alarm. The soldiers, respecting her condition, allowed her to enter the crossing so that in compliance with procedure she could be examined by a **female soldier** to preserve her dignity. She entered the crossing and detonated the explosives she was carrying, killing herself and four others.

- Following are the names and descriptions of the various border crossings serving the entire Palestinian population, which were targeted by Palestinian terrorists during 2003:
  - The **Karni cargo crossing** is a main artery for the passage of goods **to and from the Gaza Strip** . Through it agricultural produce (such as bananas and meat) enter; at the same time fruit, vegetables and flowers (earmarked for export to foreign countries) leave. In addition, various raw materials and merchandise enter and leave the Gaza Strip. (For an aerial photograph of the Karni cargo crossing and information about Palestinian terrorist attacks in 2003, see **Appendix B** .)
  - The **Sufah crossing** is the **main route** for building materials (i.e., cement, gravel and sand) entering the Gaza Strip. (For an aerial photograph of the Sufah crossing and information about Palestinian terrorist attacks in 2003, see **Appendix C** .)
  - The **Rafiah [Rafah] crossing** is on the Gaza-Egypt border, and is the Strip's lifeline to the outside world. (For an aerial photograph of the Rafiah [Rafah] crossing and information about Palestinian terrorist attacks in 2003, see **Appendix D** .)
  - The Israeli **District Coordination Office** (DCL) at Tulkarm on the West Bank serves the civilian Palestinian population in that area. Its emphasis is on **humanitarian solutions** for **personal, health and related problems** . [1]

[1] On October 9, 2003, a suicide bomber belonging to Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades perpetrated an attack at a DCL reception window in Tulkarm. Four Israeli soldiers stationed there were wounded.

## Appendix A

### Terrorist Attacks at the Erez Complex during 2003

**A**. Jan 14 - site where mortar shell landed
**B**. Feb 8 - site where mortar shell landed
**C**. Feb 21 – site of attempted infiltration
**D**. Feb 21 – site of shooting incident
**E**. June 8 – site of terrorist infiltration at Magen [shield] 12 outpost
**F**. Sep 8 – site of attempted infiltration
**G**. Nov 9 – site where mortar shell landed
**H**. Dec 4– site of attempt to transfer explosives

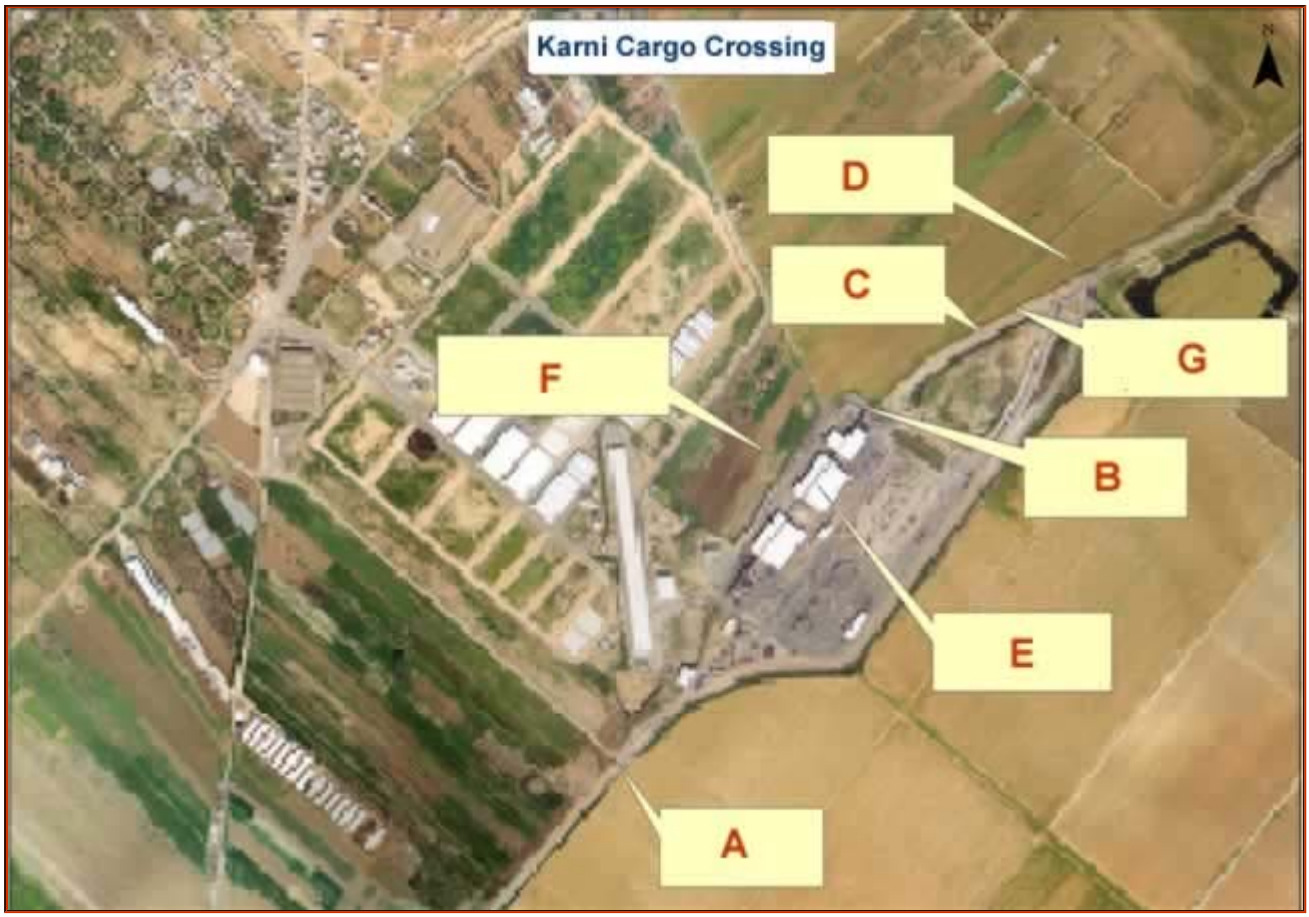
**Notes**

- To the above list (relating to various Palestinian terrorist attacks at the Erez complex during 2003) the suicide bombing attack of January 14, 2004 should be added.

- The most serious terrorist attack in 2003 occurred on June 8 when terrorists belonging to Hamas, Fatah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad infiltrated and attacked the Israeli Magen 12 outpost using assault rifles and hand grenades. Four Israeli soldiers were killed and 5 were wounded.

## Appendix B

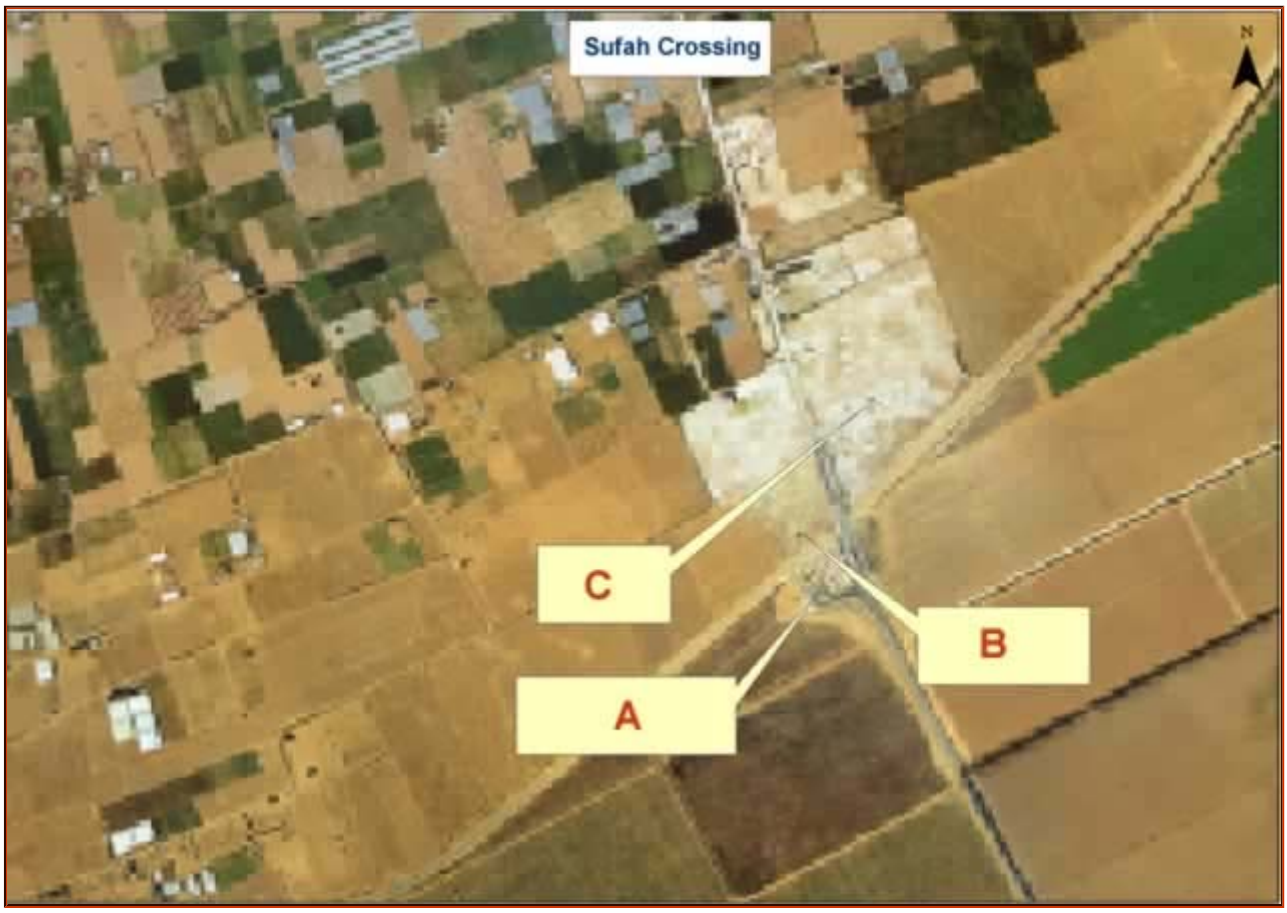
### Terrorist Attacks at the Karni Cargo Crossing during 2003




**A**. Jan 22 – shooting incident
**B**. Jan 28 – shooting incident
**C**. Feb 9 – side charge planted
**D**. Aug 29 – side charge planted
**E**. Apr 15 – terrorist infiltration
**F**. Sept 9 –infiltration attempted and bomb planted
**G**. Oct 22 – side charge planted

## Appendix C

### Terrorist Attacks at The Sufah Crossing during 2003



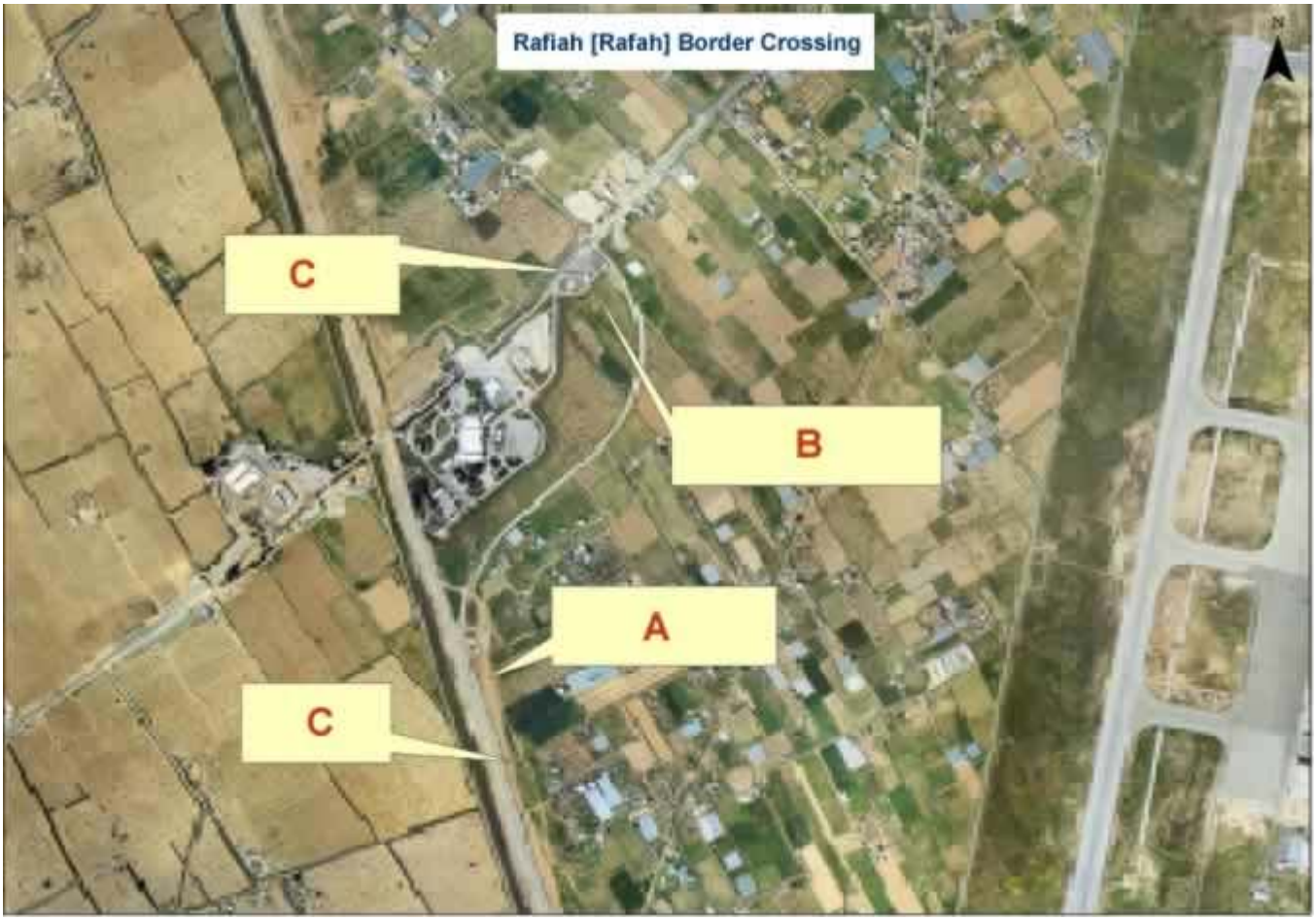

**A**. Apr 22 – 2 mortar shells fired
**B**. May 30 – suicide bombing attack
**C**. June 7 – mortar shells fired

**Note**

The most serious Palestinian terrorist attack at the Sufah crossing was the infiltration of a Hamas operative on April 15, 2003. During the exchange of fire and as a result of the explosion of hand grenades 2 Israeli citizens were killed and 3 were wounded; the terrorist was killed as well.

## Appendix D

### Terrorist Attack at The Rafiah [Rafah] Border Crossing during 2003




**A**. Jan 21 – bus fired on

**B**. Jan 31 – terrorist killed

**C**. Apr 15 – shooting incident

**D**. June 16 – side charge planted