



Hamas's military wing conducted a large-scale military maneuver

March 27, 2018

- ▶ **Hamas's military wing conducted a large-scale two-day (March 25-26, 2018) military maneuver in the Gaza Strip, entitled "Steadfastness and Challenge."** According to the organizers, **30,000 military wing operatives from various units (sea, land, air) took part in the maneuver.** As part of it, military wing operatives spread throughout the Gaza Strip, **deployed armored vehicles simulating IDF tanks**, practiced attacking these vehicles, fired experimental rockets at the Mediterranean, and **operated UAVs bearing the inscription "Ababil."** They also practiced **abducting IDF soldiers**, emerging from tunnel openings, and thwarting air landings (Al-Quds; Ma'an News Agency; Safa News Agency; Dunia Al-Watan; QUDSN's Facebook page, March 25, 2018).
- ▶ At the end of the maneuver, **Abu Obeida, spokesman for the military wing of Hamas, gave a speech from the field** summing up the maneuver. According to him, it demonstrated the **readiness of the Hamas military wing for an Israeli attack** and the coordination capabilities between the various Hamas units. **Abu Obeida warned Israel of an attack for which Israel would pay a heavy price** (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, March 26, 2018).
- ▶ Palestinian commentators from Gaza claimed that the maneuver was conducted in the wake of the combined military exercise conducted by the IDF together with the US Army. They also said that it was intended **to convey a deterrent message to Israel in anticipation of Land Day** (Dunia Al-Watan on YouTube, March 25, 2018).

The maneuver took place shortly before Land Day (March 30, 2018), and in advance of the start of the planned mass march. In the ITIC's assessment, it is intended to convey **the deterrent message to Israel** that Hamas is ready for escalation if it develops in the wake of the events. The maneuver was also intended to convey a message to the Palestinian Authority that despite the difficult economic situation, Hamas still **enjoys control of the Gaza Strip** and will not yield to the threats of Mahmoud Abbas and to the other restrictions that he wishes to impose on the Gaza Strip.

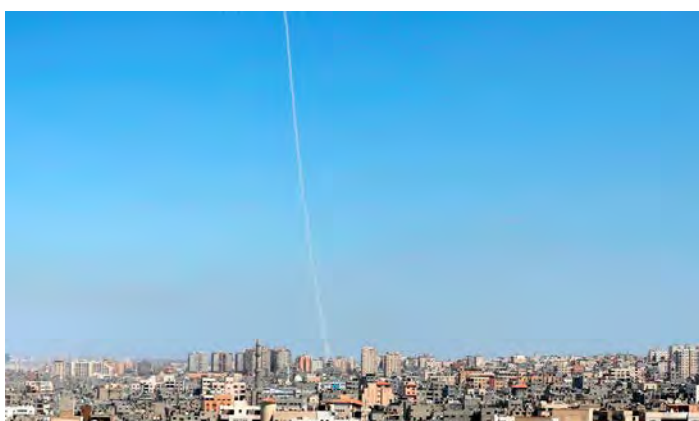


Abu Obeida, spokesman for the military wing of Hamas, delivering a speech summing up Hamas’s military maneuver in the Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, March 26, 2018)

Photos from the maneuver



Right: Extensive deployment of armed Hamas operatives throughout the Gaza Strip (PalInfo’s Twitter account, March 25, 2018)



Firing rockets at the Mediterranean from a populated area in the Gaza Strip (PalInfo’s Twitter account; QUDSN’s Facebook page, March 25, 2018)



**Emerging from a tunnel opening
(PalInfo's Twitter account, March 25, 2018)**



Storming IDF tanks (PalInfo's Twitter account, March 25, 2018)



**Right: Abducting soldiers from tanks. Left: Escaping from a tank with abducted soldiers
(PalInfo's Twitter account, March 25, 2018)**



Stepping on an Israeli flag (PalInfo's Twitter account, March 25, 2018)