



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
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**Hamas and the other Palestinian
terrorist organizations are taking
advantage of the lull in the fighting
to promote their military buildup,
which includes intensive training, in
preparation for the day after**



Hamas operatives on military training in Jebaliya (Muhammad Salem for Reuters, August 5)

Overview

1. Since the lull arrangement first became effective (June 19, 2008), there has been a meaningful decrease in the volume of rocket fire and mortar shelling at Israeli population centers in the western Negev. Likewise, the IDF has halted its counterterrorist activities in the Gaza Strip. The calm that has settled over the region, sporadically violated by rogue terrorist organizations, is used by Hamas and other terrorist organizations (the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees) to promote their military buildup, a process which started before the lull.¹ The military buildup during the lull in the fighting continues unhindered, taking advantage of the cessation of the IDF's activity in the Gaza Strip.

2. The military buildup during the lull includes **three main components**:

a. **Intensive training.** According to the organizations, the training is mostly designed to counter a possible Israeli attack in the Gaza Strip. However, there have also been military exercises to improve operative and offensive capabilities, such as simulations of infiltrating IDF outposts, shootings, and abductions. Such training is widely covered on the Palestinian, Arab, and international media, driven by the interest of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations to communicate a message of deterrence to Israel. Sometimes, the organizations invite journalists to visit the training camps and report their impressions on the media.

b. **Smuggling arms and ammunition**, particularly using the tunnel network in the Rafah region. The present scale of smuggling activity is similar to the pre-lull times. Egypt attempts to prevent the smuggling, however, so far it has been unable to reduce its scale significantly. The smuggling makes it possible to introduce standard weapons and ammunition into the Gaza Strip, including weapons that the organizations did not possess so far.

c. **Expanding and developing independently-manufactured weapons and ammunition** and **continuing the construction of the underground tunnel network.**

3. Following are the main points of the military buildup process, divided by organization.

¹ See our Information Bulletin: ["Hamas's military buildup in the Gaza Strip \(Updated April 2008\)"](#) (April 8, 2008).

The Hamas movement

4. Operatives of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's terrorist-operative wing, use the lull of the fighting for training designed to increase their combat skills and expand the variety of military courses. Also, they endeavor to develop the technical capabilities of the manufacturing and engineering units. An article published in the Hamas organ Al-Risala claimed that calling the current situation in the Gaza Strip "warrior's rest" was inaccurate, because the forces were constantly engaged in intensive activity. One of the movement's operatives even said that the situation was "tense", and that the lull in the fighting doubled the amount of training. He also said that the activity was rather hectic, because in Hamas's view the lull can end at any moment (Al-Risala, July 10).

5. On July 19, Hamas's terrorist-operative wing held a military training in Al-Sabra, a Gaza City neighborhood, in which dozens of operatives took part. During the exercise, the operatives passed through the city streets and fired into the air. According to Hamas, the training was designed to prove to Israel that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades were prepared for any possible operation (of IDF) in the Gaza Strip (Palestine-info, July 19).

6. "Work accidents" are one indication of the intensive training activity. On July 8, for example, an accident took place in a training camp of Hamas's terrorist-operative wing in Khan Younes. Two Hamas operatives were killed and one was severely injured in an explosion whose causes remain unknown. According to several reports, the training was held in a camp located in a former Gush Katif settlement. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued an official announcement saying that the operatives died as a result of a technical malfunction (Palmedia website, July 8). On July 30, another work accident took place in a Hamas training camp near Khan Younes, in which six Hamas operatives were injured (article by Ali Waqed, ynet, July 30).



Operatives of Hamas's terrorist-operative wing train in Gaza City
(Muhammad Salem for Reuters, August 10)

Palestinian Islamic Jihad

7. The Jerusalem Brigades, the terrorist-operative wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), also use the lull in the fighting for training and manufacturing of weapons and ammunition. A reporter for NTV, a Lebanese television network, accompanied the PIJ operatives on training and described it in an in-depth article. She said that the commanders of the terrorist-operative wing developed a highly intensive training program to prepare operatives, a program which includes ambushes, setting explosive charges, and reconnaissance patrols. The article also states that even though Israel systematically attacked the organization's manufacturing units, its operatives continue to produce explosive charges, mortar shells, and rockets (NTV, July 9).

8. On August 13, several dozen Jerusalem Brigades operatives held a military rally, during which they used anti-tank missiles, machine guns, and independently-manufactured rockets. One of the organization's leaders said that the PIJ activity was part of the preparations made by the Palestinian resistance for the next coming confrontation (Paltoday website, August 13).



Jerusalem Brigades on training, demonstrating their rocket fire capabilities (PALDF forum, August 14)

Popular Resistance Committees

9. To increase its combat readiness for a possible confrontation with Israel, the Salah al-Din Brigades, the terrorist-operative wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, held a number of courses attended by several hundred operatives. The training included **simulations of storming military outposts** using anti-tank weapons and firing rockets on the target outposts, jumping over obstacles while shooting, drive-by shooting, attacking military convoys using explosive charge ambushes, firing machine guns, and abducting soldiers. Following the training, live fire exercises were held near the city of Rafah. Similar training was held elsewhere in the Gaza Strip (Qawem website, August 8).



Military training held by PRC operatives (Kamal al-Nayrab faction) in the city of Rafah (Qawem website, August 8)

10. The PRC allowed a CNN crew to visit one of the organization's military training facilities. The operatives introduced to the reporters the new recruits now undergoing basic training, which included firing, taking hostages, and more. The reporter crew was allowed to visit one of the organization's rocket manufacturing workshops, accompanied by local Palestinian journalists. During the visit, the organization's operatives showed the reporters a model of an

improved rocket they had developed, called Nasser-4. They claimed the rocket had double the range of other Palestinian organizations' rockets (CNN, August 3).²



A workshop for home-made rockets operated by the PRC during the lull in the fighting

² The PRC currently has in its possession independently-manufactured Nasser-4 rockets whose maximum range is about 9 km; see our Information Bulletin: [“Rocket threat from the Gaza Strip, 2000-2007”](#) (December 2007). Following the publication on CNN, the organization’s spokesman denied the information on the new rocket’s development, but noted that the PRC was striving to improve its rocket capabilities (Sawt al-Haqq website, August 16).