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After Operation Cast Lead Hamas Used Cement Delivered to the Gaza Strip to Rebuild and Upgrade Its Military-Terrorist Infrastructure at the Expense of Civilian Needs

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Normally we don't ask for donations for specific items, since donations to our two exempt accounts in Cyprus or the U.S. are used to pay the boats or for operating costs. However, we are seeking out this special appeal to the hundreds of you who have said, "But can't I contribute to something specific, something that I can be proud to buy and know will help the people of Gaza?" Therefore, we have set up our PayPal account at <http://www.freegaza.org/donations> to accept donations for cement and book bags. In the message section on PayPal, tell us you want the money to purchase cement or book bags. Or you can wire money into the Irish account designated below this announcement. We will use your donation for cement for reconstruction or book bags for the children if you designate it's for them.

Buy a Bag of Cement

The Free Gaza Movement calls on communities, schools, mosques, trade unions and families across the world to support 3 bags of cement and school supplies to be sold to Gaza. They will be loaded onto our Irish ships at the Free Gaza Centre, as part of an International Flotilla of ships.

Just €5 will get you a bag of cement to help the people of Gaza rebuild, supporting the Palestinian people and their refusal to be taken down a demilitarizing page and 100p each. €5 for a bag of cement or €10 for two bags, €20 for four bags, €100 for 10 bags or €1 for a school supply bag.

Donate NOW!

International Solidarity Movement

- Weekend donation to commemorate the 10th anniversary
- Time to make the day

A call for donations to buy cement for the civilian population in the Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead (Freegaza.org, 1 April 12, 2010). The pro-Palestinian organizations represented the purchase of cement as humanitarian aid for the Gazans, but in reality the top priority was given to Hamas' military buildup in the Gaza Strip.

Overview

1. Cement is a vital commodity, and was needed by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the Gazan civilian population after Operation Cast Lead to build new buildings and rebuild those that had been damaged during the operation. However, ITIC information at the time indicated that Hamas made wide use of the cement that reached the Gaza Strip or was manufactured there to rebuild its military infrastructure damaged in Operation Cast Lead, and to construct new military-terrorist facilities. A significant amount of the cement was allotted to building the extensive system of attack tunnels (exposed during Operation Protective Edge), smuggling tunnels, and defensive tunnels under Gaza's urban landscape. The cement was also used to construct posts and facilities for weapons storage, military training and rocket launching.

2. Allotting the cement to military purposes at the expense of Gazan civilian needs was part of **Hamas' strategic concept of giving priority to rebuilding and**

¹ Free Gaza is an international pro-Hamas network whose stated objective is "breaking the siege" of the Gaza Strip. It played an important role in the flotilla project to the Gaza Strip and participated in the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla.

upgrading its military capabilities. Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' political bureau, admitted as much at an Arab conference held in Damascus. In November 2009 he said that "Outwardly the visible picture is talks about reconciliation...and construction; however, the hidden picture is that **most of the money and effort is invested in the resistance and military preparations...**"²

3. Given the limitations Israel placed on delivering cement into the Gaza Strip, in the years since Operation Cast Lead Hamas has used a variety of methods to acquire it to promote its military-terrorist needs. The most common method was smuggling large quantities in through the tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza Strip border. Other methods included manufacturing it themselves in factories in the Gaza Strip working under Hamas supervision; using building materials taken from the ruins of the Israeli settlements destroyed after Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005; and the commandeering of cement delivered into the Gaza Strip from international aid organizations or brought in by aid convoys.



Sacks of UNRWA building materials found by IDF soldiers during Operation Protective Edge which were used to construct tunnels (IDF Spokesman, July 29, 2014)

4. For additional information about Hamas' military use of cement in recent years, see the June 14, 2010 bulletin "The cement shortage in the Gaza Strip makes it difficult to carry out rehabilitation works and improve the living conditions of the population. However, reliable intelligence indicates that Hamas uses cement for military needs as part of its overall strategy of giving priority to its military infrastructure over Gaza Strip residents' needs."

² For further information see the August 3, 2014 bulletin "Prioritization of Hamas' Military Buildup vs. the Gaza Strip's Civilian Needs: Hamas' genuine strategic priorities according to Khaled Mashaal, about a year after Operation Cast Lead."

Appendix

The cement shortage in the Gaza Strip makes it difficult to carry out rehabilitation works and improve the living conditions of the population. However, reliable intelligence indicates that Hamas uses cement for military needs as part of its overall strategy of giving priority to its military infrastructure over Gaza Strip residents' needs.

Overview

1. Cement is a vital commodity needed by the Hamas de-facto administration and Gaza Strip residents alike to **build new buildings and restore those buildings damaged in Operation Cast Lead. However, reliable intelligence information indicates that Hamas makes extensive use of cement to rebuild military infrastructure hit in Operation Cast Lead and to create new military infrastructure.** For example, Hamas establishes outposts, training compounds, and storage sites; digs defensive and offensive tunnels; and creates rocket launch sites lined with concrete.
2. Such activities are part of an **overall strategy of giving priority to the rehabilitation and buildup of military infrastructure over the needs of the population. Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mash'al said as much at a conference in Damascus ("On the surface, [statements in the Gaza Strip] refer to reconciliation [between Hamas and Fatah] and rebuilding, however, what is not revealed is that most of Hamas' funds and efforts are invested in the resistance and military preparations...").**
3. **In this state of affairs, Israel imposed restrictions on the import of cement into the Gaza Strip,** causing a cement shortage (considering the large quantities of cement needed for restoration). **Hamas was able to find partial solutions to those restrictions, mostly through its smuggling industry and self-production of cement and concrete.** However, those solutions cannot meet Hamas' plans.
4. Hamas seeks support from the international community **in acquiring cement, making use of propaganda to play up the issue of cement shortage.** Accordingly, humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip (such as the recent flotilla) included

cement, while international aid organizations like Free Gaza are running a fundraiser with the purpose of purchasing cement for Hamas.

5. We believe that delivering significant quantities of cement to the Gaza Strip **will, indeed, help the population**. At the same time, **Hamas will attempt to divert meaningful quantities of it to military needs**, taking advantage of its control over the Gaza Strip and the inability of local civilian population to influence the priorities of the Hamas de-facto administration.

Recent evidence of Hamas' extensive use of cement for military needs

6. **According to reliable intelligence information from recent months** (based, among other things, on aerial photographs), **there has been a considerable increase in the use of cement and concrete by the Hamas military wing in the Gaza Strip**. The military wing **acts towards the rehabilitation and fortification of its military compounds and builds new offensive and defensive systems**, drawing also on the lessons learned in Operation Cast Lead. **A significant number of the military facilities are built in urban areas with civilian populations deep in Gaza Strip territory**. That is **part of the combat strategy adopted by Hamas** (which proved itself in Operation Cast Lead), **which builds most of its military infrastructure in densely-populated territory**, using civilians as human shields.

7. **The Hamas military wing** (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades) **uses cement mostly for the following purposes:**

a. **Building military infrastructure:** building and repairing dozens of permanent outposts, training compounds, and weapons storehouses, using large quantities of cement.

b. **Digging tunnels:** building an infrastructure of underground tunnels lined with concrete for protection. **Hamas places considerable significance on its underground infrastructure, used for both defensive and offensive needs** (such as minimizing the exposure of terrorist operatives and munitions, transporting operatives between areas, and carrying out attacks by digging tunnels from the Gaza Strip to Israeli territory).

c. **Building launch sites for artillery weapons (such as rockets and mortars):** those launch sites are lined with concrete. **The positions dug at such launch sites provide an ability to launch rockets at Israel at the push of a**

button, making the presence of human operators near the rockets unnecessary. This tactic is designed to keep rocket operators alive and to allow sustained fire with a uniform rate of fire and rocket output.

Sources of cement available to the Hamas military wing

8. Reliable intelligence information indicates that, in view of the restrictions imposed by Israel on importing cement to the Gaza Strip, Hamas employs several methods to obtain cement, **some of which is delivered to the military wing:**

a. **Hamas' smuggling industry**—the most common method of delivering cement to the Gaza Strip. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, smuggles large quantities for its needs through Hamas' tunnels along the border with Egypt. For example, on October 12, 2009, 30 tons of cement were smuggled from a tunnel in Rafah to one of Hamas' storage facilities.

b. **Self-production—the Hamas military wing manufactures construction materials, including cement and concrete, in Gaza Strip factories which it closely supervises.** The cement is manufactured from locally-available raw materials (such as fly ash and sea sand). For that purpose, Hamas built many new factories specifically affiliated with the military wing.



Cement factory owned by Hamas

c. **Use of Israeli construction materials**—Hamas makes use of construction materials from Israeli population centers abandoned during the disengagement. For that purpose, Hamas dismantles formerly-populated Israeli buildings.

9. In the past, **Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khaled Mash'al admitted that Hamas allocated most of its financial resources in the Gaza Strip to building up its military infrastructure** at the expense of civilian rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip.

10. Speaking at a convention of the Arab parties in Damascus (November 12, 2009), Khaled Mash'al said that **most of Hamas' efforts in the Gaza Strip are targeted towards military preparations**: "On the surface, [statements in the Gaza Strip] refer to reconciliation [between Hamas and Fatah] and rebuilding, however, what is not revealed is that **most of Hamas' funds and efforts are invested in the resistance and military preparations**... We are intent on the resistance".³

وفيما يتعلق بغزة، قال مشعل "ظاهر الصورة في غزة أنهم يتحدثون عن المصالحة والبناء، لكن باطن الصورة يقول إن معظم المال والجهد يذهب للمقاومة والاستعدادات العسكرية". .. مؤكدا "نحن شغالين على المقاومة".

The original excerpt from Khaled Mash'al's statement

³ For more information, see our November 17, 2009 Information Bulletin: "Khaled Mashaal makes it clear that Hamas is determined to continue the path of "resistance" (i.e., terrorism) and that "other statements are political maneuvers." He reveals that Hamas uses most of its financial resources in the Gaza Strip for military purposes rather than rebuilding".