The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israeli Intelligence & Heritage Commemoration Center

September 13, 2016

Two Years After Operation Protective Edge:

Security along the Israeli-Gazan border

Preparing for the next round of fighting against Israel. Terrorist operatives of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, simulate dragging an IDF soldier from a post after it had been conquered (Filastin al-A'an, December 27, 2014).

Overview

1. On **August 26, 2014**, after fifty days of intensive Israeli-Hamas fighting, a ceasefire was reached ending Operation Protective Edge. The operation severely damaged the military infrastructures of Hamas and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations, and strengthened Israel's deterrence. However, **the last round of fighting did not decisively change the balance between Israel and the terrorist organizations**. For two years there has been an unprecedented lull in the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and in terrorist attacks along the border. That has given **Hamas time to prepare for the next round of fighting**.

2. During the two years since Operation Protective Edge **36 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory. They fell in open areas or in proximity to Israeli communities in the western Negev. Most of them were short-range rockets**. **There were no Israeli casualties and no substantial damage was reported**. An analysis of rocket fire during the past decade **indicates that the past two years were the quietest** (during the past ten years more than 10,000 rocket hits were

identified in Israeli territory). However, **the "rogue" terrorist organizations still sporadically fire rockets, disrupting the daily lives of the Israelis of the western Negev and providing a reminder of the terrorist threat from the Gaza Strip**.

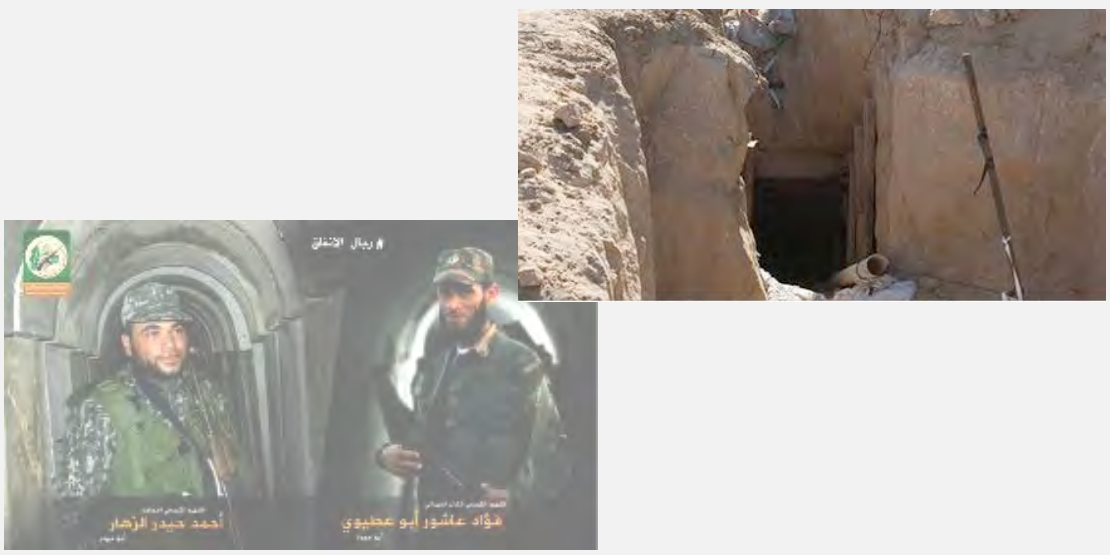
3. The significant decline in rocket fire **is a function of Hamas' policy of restraint, which it has imposed on the rogue terrorist organizations more stringently than in the aftermaths of previous IDF operations** (imposed particularly on the Salafi jihadist organizations which periodically challenge Hamas). **Hamas adopted the policy for a variety of strategic reasons**, mainly **Israel's increased post-Operation Protective Edge deterrent capabilities and Hamas' desire to gain time to rehabilitate its military capabilities without significant interference from Israel**.

4. Other reasons for its policy of restraint were Hamas' need, as a governmental authority, **to rehabilitate the civilian infrastructure of the Gaza Strip** (although its top priority is its military infrastructure); **the deterioration of relations with Egypt; the cooling off of relations with countries like Iran** (a former strategic ally) **and Saudi Arabia. There is also the necessity for a quiet period before the local elections in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip** (where Hamas expects to make significant gains).

5. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations exploit the relative calm for **an intensive push to rehabilitate their military capabilities damaged** in Operation Protective Edge. They invest their efforts in the following fields:

a. **Replenishing the stocks of weapons and ammunition lost in Operation Protective Edge**: On the eve of Operation Protective Edge **Hamas had about 11,000 rockets**, most of them short-range and some long-range (up to 160 kilometers, or about 100 miles). After the operation about one third of the original quantities remained after almost 4,000 rockets had been fired into Israeli territory and others lost in Israeli attacks. Thus the **top priority of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations is increasing their stocks of rockets and mortar shells, and improving their technical capabilities**. **Hamas is apparently putting its emphasis on the acquisition of short-range rockets**, the result of both the lessons learned in Operation Protective Edge and the difficulties it experiences in smuggling standard long-range rockets into the Gaza Strip from the Sinai Peninsula.

b. **Rebuilding an extensive tunnel system, especially tunnels entering Israeli territory.** Israeli defense sources estimate that before Operation Protective Edge **Hamas had approximately 32 attack tunnels, about a third of which crossed the border**. Hamas regards their use in Operation Protective Edge as a strategic and plans to use them to challenge Israel in the next round of fighting. Thus Hamas is putting an emphasis on constructing more attack tunnels and on training its regular forces and elite units (especially its elite *nukhba* and naval commando units) **to transfer the fighting into Israeli territory.** The operatives who emerge in Israeli territory are expected to attack IDF posts and patrols, and infiltrate civilian communities near the Gaza Strip to carry out mass-casualty attacks and abduct Israelis for use as bargaining chips.



Left: Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades terrorist operatives killed when a tunnel collapsed in the southern Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website, February 2, 2016). Right: A tunnel shaft inside Israeli territory, several dozen yards from the border security fence in the central Gaza Strip, exposed by the IDF in April 2016 (IDF spokesman, April 18, 2016).

c. **Hamas' military buildup**: Operation Protective Edge severely damaged the military capabilities of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations. Rehabilitating, strengthening and enlarging them require **enlisting new operatives, rehabilitating the units that were decimated and establishing new ones**. Hamas puts special emphasis on **fostering its elite *nukhba* and naval commando units,** whose operations in Operation Protective Edge **Hamas considered successful**. To restore its fighting forces to full operational capabilities Hamas (and the other terrorist organizations) conduct **intensive training**, **especially in infiltrating Israel, attacking Israeli targets and abducting IDF soldiers**. In addition to training its regular forces Hamas is making an effort **to improve the military capabilities of its security forces, to**

train militias (a "popular army") and establish military frameworks for youths to train as auxiliary forces.

d. **Increasing Hamas' terrorist presence along the border with Israel**: After Operation Protective Edge **Hamas built a series of forward posts** at a distance of a few hundred meters from the border security fence. **Observation towers** were also constructed and **are manned by Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives**. In addition, **a road was paved near the fence**. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) also erected observation towers. The new line of posts improves Hamas' ability to enforce its policy of restraint on the rogue organizations. To that end a new military-security force was established called "**the restraining force**." The new posts also improve Hamas' ability to monitor the activities of IDF forces along the border, improve its routine security activity and its ability to initiate attacks against Israel from locations near the border.

e. **Creating new bypass channels to smuggle weapons, equipment and raw materials into the Gaza Strip**: Hamas' traditional supply line of weapons and raw materials into the Gaza Strip from the Sinai Peninsula was seriously disrupted by the obstacles put in place by Egypt to prevent smuggling (destroying tunnels, closing the Rafah crossing). Thus Hamas uses **two main methods to bypass the restrictions placed on it: smuggling from Israel, by exploiting the import of civilian materials through the crossings; and employing the services of local fishermen who ply the sea between the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula**. In ITIC assessment the weapons and materials entering the Gaza Strip via the two aforementioned bypass channels are **fewer than those that entered previously through the tunnels**.

6. One conclusion drawn from an analysis of Hamas' military buildup is that **the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip and the IDF soldiers serving near the border security fence will be a main target for the terrorist organization attacks in the next round of fighting**. The **training** Hamas and the other terrorist organizations give their operatives, **especially the *nukhba* unit and the naval commandos, strongly emphasizes entering Israeli territory through tunnels and from the sea**. Emphasis is put on **abducting IDF soldiers (or their bodies) to use as bargaining chips for the release of Palestinian terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israel**. They also train in firing **artillery (especially mortar shells)** at Israeli territory near the border. **Their objective is to disrupt daily life in the Israeli population near the border and make it difficult for IDF forces to deploy and operate**.

Naval commandos simulate entering Israel and taking control of an IDF post (YouTube, December 14, 2014).

7. **The rehabilitation of military capabilities and the military buildup are still incomplete because Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have not yet reached the level of fighting fitness they had on the eve of Operation Protective Edge**. That is because of a number of weaknesses that **delay the process**. A major weakness is the **difficulty in smuggling standard weapons from the Sinai Peninsula, the result of preventive activities undertaken by the Egyptian security forces** (especially preventing long-range rockets, standard explosives and advanced anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles from reaching the Gaza Strip). **The tunnel-building project, which is Hamas' top priority, is also facing difficulties** for several reasons: Israel's counterterrorism activities, the lack of raw materials and

Hamas' attempts to construct the tunnels as quickly as possible (which has caused a number of tunnels to collapse and kill the operatives digging them).

8. It is Hamas' policy of restraint that has led it to invest in **establishing terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria for attacks against Israel**. The networks, **which are handled from the Gaza Strip and by Hamas operatives abroad** (especially in **Turkey** and **Jordan**), **have been instructed to carry out showcase attacks in Judea, Samaria and Israel, side by side with the current wave of Palestinian popular terrorism** (which broke out a year ago). To support the networks **Hamas has made efforts to smuggle funds to its operatives in Judea and Samaria** using various channels, including Jordan. The Israeli security forces and the Palestinian Authority (PA) security services have exposed most of Hamas' operational networks in Judea and Samaria and prevented them from turning popular terrorism (which is supported by the PA and Fatah) into organized military terrorism, which is far more deadly.

9. So far, **Hamas is still influenced the restraining factors** that keep it careful in its dealings with Israel. **However, that may change quickly** in certain circumstances which **may lead to an unplanned deterioration**. For example**, a showcase attack against Israel originating in Judea and Samaria is liable to result in Israeli responses that may influence the Gaza Strip** (such as the abduction and murder of three Israeli youths in June 2014, that led to a chain of events resulting in Operation Protective Edge[1]); rocket fire from the Gaza Strip causing loss of Israeli life may cause a harsh IDF response that may be considered excessive by Hamas, causing it to respond with massive rocket fire into Israeli territory; an Israeli hit on Hamas "assets," such as the attack tunnels (Hamas' flagship project), may motivate Hamas to react, especially if it finds itself in a position of extreme weakness.

10. During the two years since Operation Protective Edge **collaboration has strengthened between the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and the ISIS branch in the Sinai Peninsula** (Sinai Province of the Islamic State): **ISIS has smuggled weapons from Libya and Sudan to the Gaza Strip,** while Hamas has helped Sinai Province manufacture weapons, hospitalized its wounded operatives in the Gaza Strip and provides communications and uniforms for Sinai Province operatives. On

[1] On June 12, 2014 three Israeli youths from Gush Etzion were abducted and murdered by a Hamas terrorist squad from the Hebron region. The murder caused a series of events: the IDF conducted an intensive search for the boys and detained Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria. In response rocket fire from the Gaza Strip was increased and an attempt was made to carry out a showcase attacks using a tunnel under the border in the Kerem Shalom region (southern Gaza Strip).

the other hand, Hamas security forces oppress ISIS-affiliated Salafi jihadist networks in the Gaza Strip that challenge its governance. **The collaboration between Hamas and ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula increases the terrorist threat to Israel from the Egyptian border both routinely and whenever the security situation deteriorates**.[2]

11. **This study consists of the Overview and two Appendices**:

a. **Appendix 1: The security situation along the Israel-Gaza border in the two years since Operation Protective Edge**

1) Rocket fire originating in the Gaza Strip

2) Incidents along the border: mortar shell fire, light arms fire, IEDs

3) Palestinian riots and clashes with the IDF near the border security fence

4) Attempts of Gazans to infiltrate into Israel

5) Handling from the Gaza Strip of terrorist activity in Judea, Samaria and Israel

b. **Appendix 2: Rehabilitating the military capabilities of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations**

1) Strategic priority given to rehabilitating military capabilities at the expense of civilian needs

2) Replenishing the stocks of weapons and ammunition

3) Reconstructing the tunnel system

4) Strengthening the naval forces

5) Intensive training conducted by Hamas, the various other terrorist organizations, and the security forces operating in the Gaza Strip

6) Increased Hamas military presence along the border with Israel

7) Smuggling weapons and ammunition into the Gaza Strip through the crossings with Israel and by sea

[2] For further information, see the March 20, 2016 bulleting " Hamas as a Supporter of Anti-Egyptian Terrorism: Hamas-Egyptian relations deteriorated following the Egyptian accusation of Hamas involvement in the 2015 assassination of the Egyptian attorney general," http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20976.

Appendix 1: The Security Situation along the Israel-Gaza Border since Operation Protective Edge

Rocket Fire Originating in the Gaza Strip

The Extent and Significance of the Rocket Fire

1. The two years since the end of Operation Protective Edge **were the quietest since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (2005) and Hamas' takeover (2007)**. **Between September 2014 and August 2016, 36 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory** (three rockets fired from the Sinai Peninsula are not included in the statistics).[3]

2. **Most of the rockets fired from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory had short ranges and hit open areas or landed near communities in the western Negev. The majority of the attacks involved single rockets and not barrages**. In addition, there were other incidents: two events involving mortar shells; several dozen rockets fired at Israel but falling inside the Gaza Strip, and rockets test-fired westward into the sea. **The rockets fired into Israeli territory did not cause casualties or significant property damage**.[4] **However, the ongoing rocket fire disrupts the daily routine of the residents of the western Negev and is a reminder of the terrorist threat from the Gaza Strip**.

3. Comparatively speaking, the rocket and mortar shell fire during the past two years was **significantly less than after other major IDF operations in the Gaza Strip** (Operation Cast Lead and Operation Pillar of Defense). For example, in the year after Operation Cast Lead **158 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory and in the following year 103**. In the year after Operation Pillar of Defense, **39 rocket hits were identified and in the following year 373** (until the beginning of Operation Protective Edge). However, so far, **during the two years since Operation Protective Edge**, **there have been 36 identified rocket hits**: three at the end of 2014, 21 in 2015 and 12 in 2016 (as of September 7, 2016).

[3] As of September 12, 2016.

[4] In the two years since Operation Protective Edge two people were injured: an IDF soldier seriously wounded by sniper fire on December 24, 2015, and a woman who sustained minor injuries when a rocket hit the southern town of Sderot on September 18, 2015. In some attacks civilians were treated for shock and minor damage to property was reported.

4. **The most serious rocket attack during the past two years has been a barrage of mortar shells in May 2016**. **The attack came in the wake of the IDF exposure of an attack tunnel dug at a depth of 30 meters (almost 33 yards) crossing the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel**. IDF forces identified the route of the tunnel and destroyed it. To that end IDF engineering equipment and forces entered the Gaza Strip in the area near the border (the so-called "perimeter"). Hamas claimed Israel had violated Palestinian sovereignty and the lull agreement that ended Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

5. As a result, **for several days Hamas and the IDF exchanged fire, although both sides contained the incidents and kept them from escalating**. Hamas operatives fired mortar shells at the IDF forces operating to locate the tunnel. In response to the mortar shell fire Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hamas targets and IDF tanks fired at Hamas targets in the region of Sajaiya, east of Gaza City. **A total of 16 mortar shells were fired in at least 12 clashes. Exceptionally, the military-terrorist wings of Hamas and the PIJ claimed responsibility for the mortar shell fire**.

6. Since Operation Protective Edge **three rockets have hit inside the city of Sderot**: on **September 17, 2015** a woman was injured and property was damaged. On **July 1, 2016**, a rocket hit a center for children's afterschool activities; several people were treated for shock and the building was damaged. On **August 21, 2016**, a rocket landed between two residential buildings. There were no casualties.

7. Other rocket hits since Operation Protective Edge include the following:

a. The first rocket hit was identified on **September 16, 2014**, three weeks after the ceasefire. The rocket fell **near the border security fence in the northwestern Negev**. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

b. On **May 26, 2015**, a rocket was fired at the southern town of **Gan Yavne** (about 30 kilometers, or 19 miles, from the Gaza Strip). It was fired by the PIJ, although the organization generally follows Hamas' policy of restraint. The rocket fire was prompted by an internal dispute in the organization's leadership over the appointment of a new military commander in the northern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

c. **On September 29, 2015, a rocket was fired at the southern Israeli seaside city of Ashdod** and intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system. There

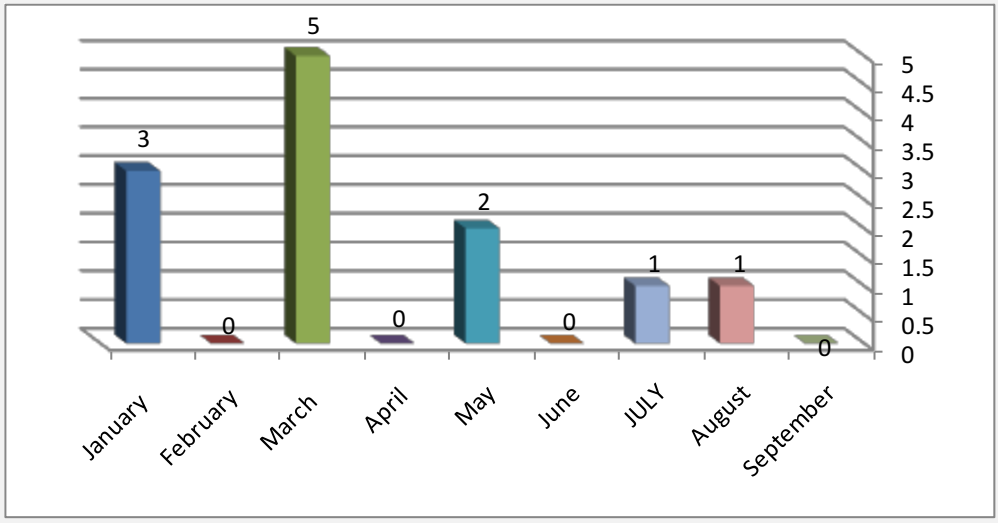
were no casualties and no damage was reported. **The Sheik Omar Hadid Company, a jihadist network affiliated with ISIS, claimed responsibility for the attack.** The attack came at the beginning of the Palestinian terrorist campaign in Judea and Samaria and was represented as revenge for the death of a female Palestinian terrorist during a stabbing attack.

d. **During October 2015 seven rocket hits were identified** in Israeli territory. The rockets were fired by **jihadist networks affiliated with ISIS** in support of the Palestinian terrorist campaign in Judea, Samaria and Israel, which was then at its height. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

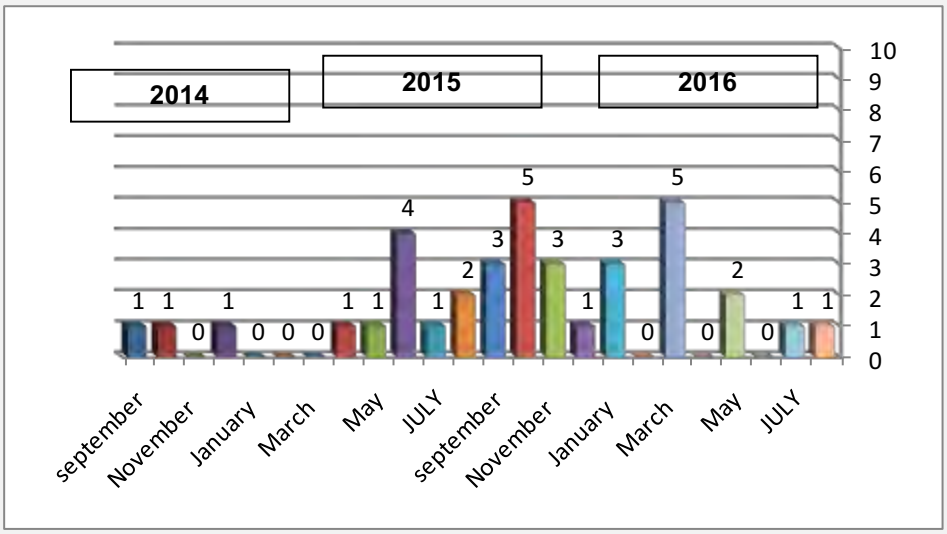
Site of a rocket hit in Ashdod on August 21, 2016. The rocket fell between two residential buildings. There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Israel Police Force spokesman unit, August 21, 2016).

Distribution of Rocket Fire

Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire, 2016

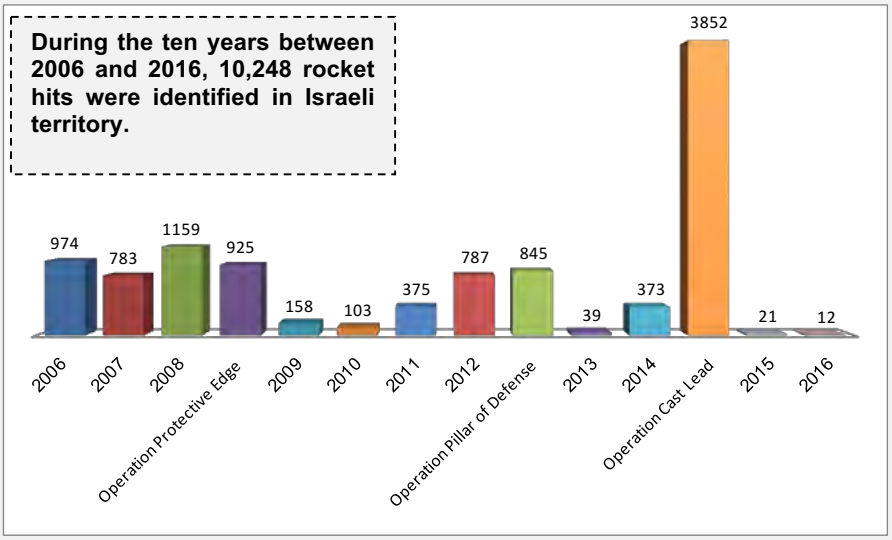


Monthly Distribution of Rocket Fire, End of 2014 to Beginning of 2016 (Between the end of Operation Protective Edge and August 24, 2016)



***Does not include three rockets fired from the Sinai Peninsula on July 3, 2015.**

Yearly Distribution of Rocket Fire since 2006[5]



Notes:

a. **Operation Cast Lead** lasted from December 27, 2008, to January 18, 2009. **A total of 571 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory**. During the following months of 2009 there were 158 identified rocket hits.

[5] The statistics do not include mortar shell fire, rockets that fell inside the Gaza Strip or rockets fired toward the sea.

b. **Operation Pillar of Defense** lasted from November 14 to November 21, 2012. **A total of 845 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory**. Between the end of the operation and the end of 2012 no rocket hits were identified. In 2013, 39 rocket hits were identified and 373 in 2014.

c. **Operation Protective Edge** lasted from July 8 to August 26, 2014. **A total of 3,852 rocket hits were identified in Israeli territory**. Between the end of the operation and the end of 2014 three rocket hits were identified, and 21 in 2015 and 12 in 2016.

8. **Three main conclusions** can be drawn from an analysis of the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip during the ten years since the Israeli withdrawal and Hamas takeover:

a. No extensive IDF operation **led to the complete, continued cessation of rocket attacks**.

b. In all cases **the extent of the rocket fire declined** during the one or two years **after extensive IDF operations,** and after that increased again.

c. After Operation Protective Edge there was also a decline in the extent of rocket fire. However, **its scope was far smaller than after previous IDF operations in the Gaza Strip**.

Rocket Fire Policies of Hamas and the Other Terrorist Organizations

9. Since Operation Protective Edge **Hamas has employed a policy of preventing rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory**. It has also enforced its policy on the rogue organizations which periodically try to challenge it, **more aggressively than in the past** (especially organizations affiliated with the global jihad). Hamas' policy of restraint is **a function of the deterrence Israel achieved with Operation Protective Edge**. While that is its main consideration, there are **others** Hamas takes into account: the need to gain time to proceed with its military buildup without significant interference from Israel; the slow reconstruction of its civilian infrastructure, which was severely damaged in Operation Protective Edge; the deterioration of its relations with Egypt and its difficulties with Iran (its former strategic ally) and Saudi Arabia.

10. Most of the rocket fire during the past two years was **carried out by Salafi jihadist operatives in the Gaza Strip, some of them affiliated with ISIS**. Allegedly

they **threatened Israel** but in most cases they signaled **defiance of Hamas**. Their primary objective was to motivate Hamas to stop pressuring them and to effect the release of their imprisoned operatives. **In most cases the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip have been obliged to comply with Hamas' policy of restraint**. However, in isolated cases they challenge it, sometimes because of internal disputes.

11. To improve its ability to enforce its policy on the rogue organizations, after Operation Pillar of Defense Hamas established a security force called the "**restraint force**." With hundreds of operatives, it operates to prevent unauthorized rocket fire, even at the expense of violent physical clashes with rogue organization operatives. When necessary the restraint force is supported by Hamas' military-terrorist wing (which has a permanent presence near the border security fence) and other security forces controlled by Hamas. In ITIC assessment the system controlled by Hamas has successfully prevented a large number of rogue organization attacks, but occasionally isolated attacks are carried out **in contradiction of Hamas policy**.

Restraint force operatives photographed with visitors from the Gaza Strip ministry of the interior (Website of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, June 17, 2013).

12. As noted, Hamas' policy of restraint is **a primarily function of the deterrence Israel gained in Operation Protective Edge**. However, deterrence is an Israeli asset **subject to erosion over time**, as past experience has shown (usually a year or two). Since Operation Protective Edge **Hamas has given more weight to considerations of restraint, delaying the rate of erosion**.

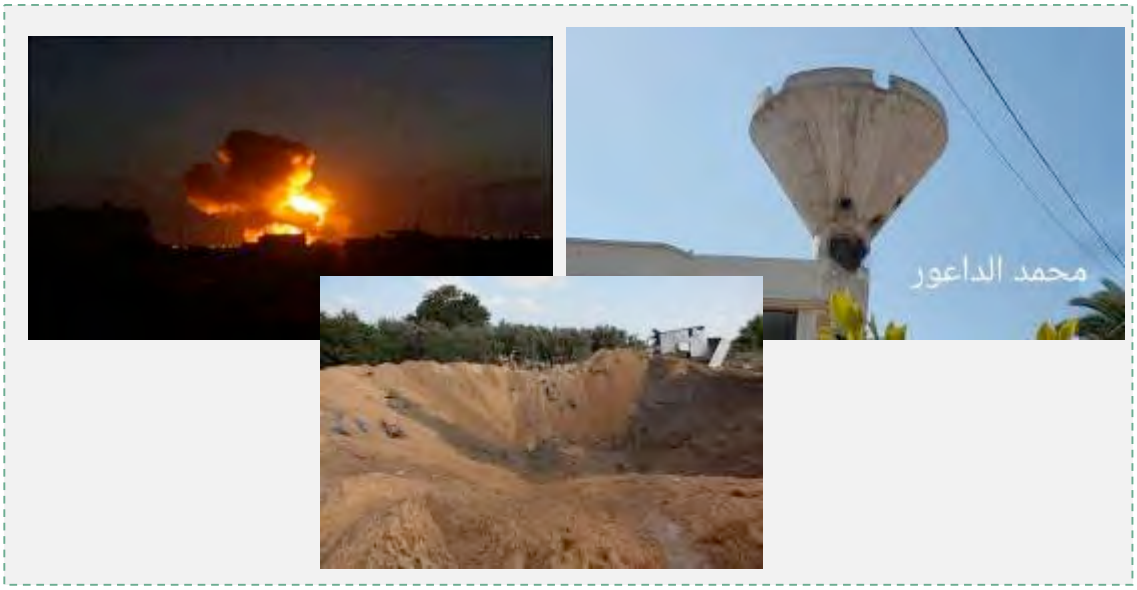
13. In ITIC assessment, Hamas still feels it is in its own best interests to continue the lull along the Gaza Strip border, and therefore it continues its policy of restraint.

However, in one of the following scenarios **the security situation in the south may deteriorate**: rocket fire into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip and an Israeli response considered excessive by Hamas; the Israeli destruction of attack tunnels (regarded by Hamas as strategic assets) and a large scale Hamas response; showcase attacks in Judea, Samaria and Israel and a harsh IDF response that may influence the Gaza Strip (such as the events leading to Operation Protective Edge).

Israel's Responses to Rocket Fire from the Gaza Strip

14. So far Israel has responded to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip with **aerial attacks on terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, generally speaking Hamas targets**. That is because **Israel regards Hamas as the de facto governmental entity in the Gaza Strip,** responsible for preventing attacks on Israel and for preserving the quiet along the border. Israel responds close to the time of the rocket fire to ensure Hama' understands the message and internalizes Israel's deterrent power. Moreover, Israel is careful in its choice of targets, **not wanting to exert too much pressure on Hamas and to enable Hamas to contain the event and keep the situation from deteriorating.**

15. There was an exceptional Israeli response to the rocket attack on Sderot on August 21: **Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked several Hamas and PIJ targets, carrying out about fifty sorties**. The IDF also fired artillery at Hamas targets in the Beit Hanoun region of the northern Gaza Strip. The attacks were **exceptional in both scope and force, compared with other IDF responses to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip since the end of Operation Protective Edge**. According to Palestinian reports, the targets included posts, tunnels and observation points. However, IDF and Hamas spokesmen publicly stated that **they did not want the situation to escalate**.



Pictures from the Palestinian media of Israeli Air Force attacks after the rocket fire targeting Sderot. Left: Night attack. Right: A water tower in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, which served as an observation point (Facebook page of Quds.net, August 21, 2016). Center: An attack in the Beit Hanoun region, northern Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Shehab, August 22, 2016).

Incidents along the Border: Mortar Shell Fire, Light Arms Fire, IEDs

16. During the two years since Operation Protective Edge there have been **a number of incidents along the Gaza Strip**. Most of them have involved light arms fire and IEDs, and in one instance mortars shell fire. **Most of the attacks targeted Israeli security forces near the border**. In two exceptional incidents snipers shot at Israeli communities in the western Negev. During the past two years there have been fewer incidents than during the two years following other IDF operations in the Gaza Strip. **Israel and Hamas have both contained the incidents and prevented escalation following them**.

17. During the past two years **there have been two exceptional incidents**:

a. In **May 2016,** the IDF destroyed a Hamas terrorist attack tunnel which crossed the border into Israeli territory. For several days following there were approximately 12 incidents in the southern Gaza Strip during which mortar shells were fired. Unlike previous instances, the military wings of both Hamas and the PIJ played an active role in the clashes.

b. On **December 16, 2015**, an IED was detonated to attack an IDF patrol near the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties. A

search of the area revealed a series of powerful IEDs, remotely triggered by cell phones, which had not detonated. It was **the first time since Operation Protective Edge** in which a Gazan terrorist organization initiated a large-scale attack on IDF forces operating near the border. **The al-Sabirin movement, affiliated with Iran and Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for the attack**. Their alleged intention was to show solidarity with the Palestinian terrorist campaign waged at the time in Judea, Samaria and Israel.

18. **Between August 31 and September 6, 2016**, there was a series of shooting attacks from the northern Gaza Strip targeting IDF forces engaged in routine security activities. The reason for the attacks and the identity of the shooters are unknown. The IDF returned fire at terrorist targets in the northern Gaza Strip:

a. On **September 6, 2016**, Palestinians fired light arms at routine IDF patrols near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Red Alert, September 6, 2016). According to Palestinian reports, the IDF fired artillery at two Hamas posts and an observation point of the Jerusalem Battalions, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing (Ma'an and Wafa, September 6, 2016).

b. On **September 4, 2016**, Palestinians fired light arms at an IDF force near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. In response the IDF attacked an abandoned Hamas post near Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip. No casualties or damage was reported (Ynet and Wafa, September 4, 2016).

c. On **August 31, 2016**, a Palestinian sniper shot at an IDF force engaged in routine activities near the border security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. An IDF vehicle was hit (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 31, 2016).

19. Other border incidents:

a. On **April 8, 2016, an IED was detonated in the northern Gaza Strip near an IDF bulldozer** engaged in routine security activities near the border security fence. There were no casualties and no damage was reported.

b. On **January 13, 2016**, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a terrorist squad **placing IEDs in the northern Gaza Strip**. According to Israeli security sources, the terrorists planned to detonate the IEDs in an attack on an IDF force engaged in security activities near the border security fence.

c. On **December 6, 2015**, Palestinians **used light arms to shoot at an IDF engineering vehicl**e near the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. There were no casualties; the vehicle was damaged.

d. On **December 4, 2015**, **Palestinians used light arms to shoot at an IDF force** in a vehicle near the Gaza Strip border. There were no casualties; the vehicle was damaged.

e. On **October 30, 2015**, **a Palestinian threw a pipe bomb at an IDF force** near the border at Nahal Oz. There were no casualties. The soldiers shot at the Palestinian who threw the bomb.

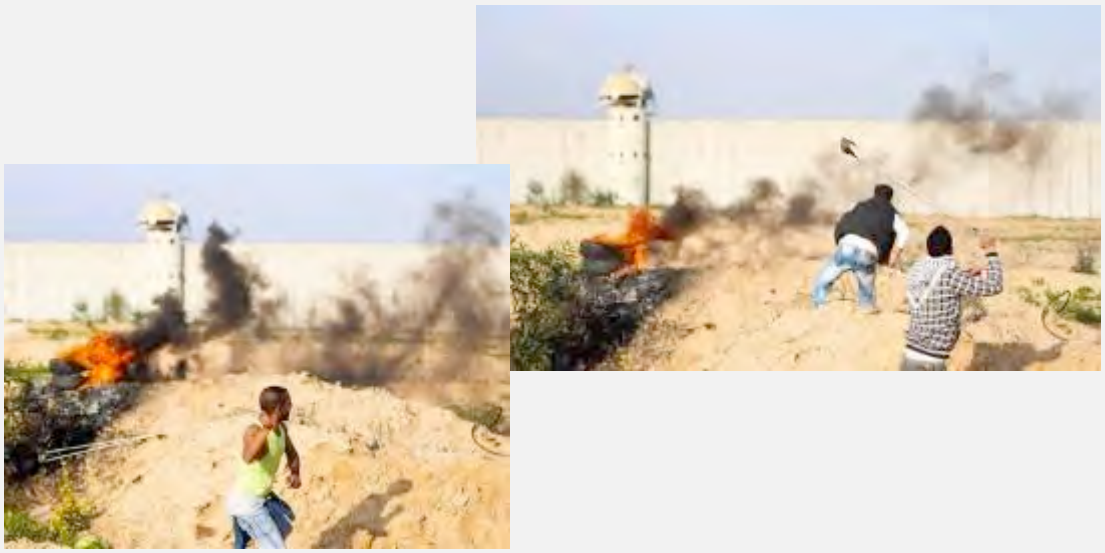
f. On **October 29, 2015**, **Palestinians snipers shot at a community north of the Gaza Strip near the border**. There were no casualties. A house was hit by a bullet.

g. On **October 15, 2015, Palestinians snipers shot at an armored IDF bulldozer**. There were no casualties; the bulldozer was grazed.

h. On **December 24, 2014, 2014**, **Palestinians snipers shot at an IDF force** securing maintenance work east of the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. An IDF soldier was critically wounded.

Palestinian Riots and Clashes with the IDF near the Border Security Fence

20. Since the end of Operation Protective Edge there have been Palestinian **demonstrations, riots and clashes with the IDF near the border security fence** (similar to the weekly riots at various locations in Judea and Samaria, part of the Palestinians so-called "popular resistance"). They began shortly after the ceasefire that ended Operation Protective Edge. They have generally been held on Friday after the prayers in the mosques, although sometimes during the week as well. The demonstrators hold signs, throw stones, set fire to tires and generally challenge the Israeli security forces.



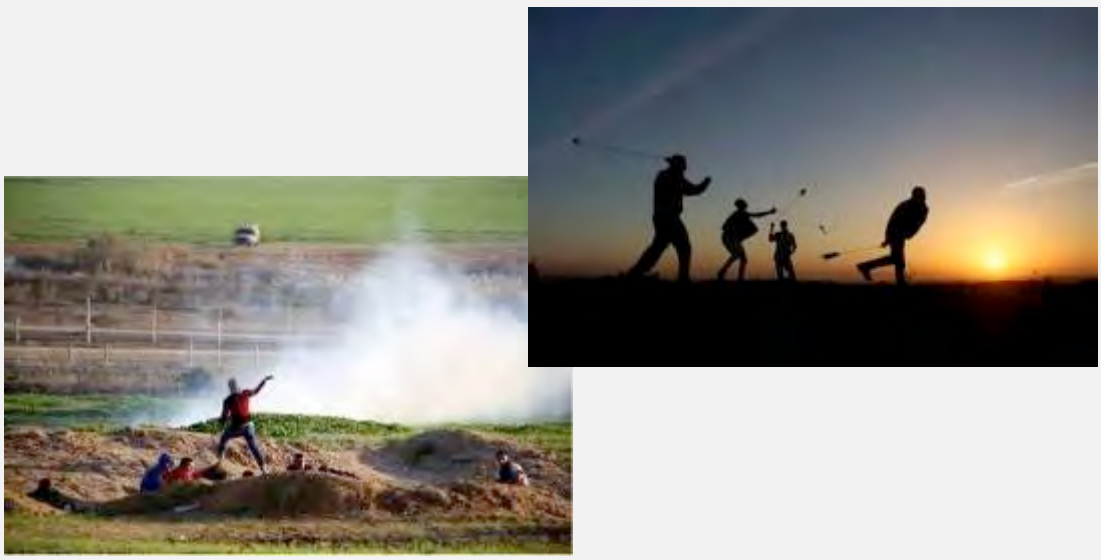
Palestinians riots against an IDF force near the Erez crossing in the northern Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Quds, February 5, 2016).

21. The first riot took place on November 23, 2014. About three hundred Gazans approached the border security fence in the southern Gaza Strip. They vandalized the fence and tried to enter Israeli territory. IDF forces tried to distance them but when they refused to retreat the soldiers fired their weapons to deter them. Riots near the border security fence increased significantly after September 2015 in the wake of the Palestinian terrorist campaign in Judea, Samaria and Israel.

22. **During the first months of the Palestinian terrorist campaign Gazans frequently rioted near the border.** They focused on the **Erez crossing and the regions of Sajaiya, al-Bureij and Khan Yunis**. Several thousand Palestinians from the Gaza Strip participated, gathering near the border security fence. They threw stones, burned tires and tossed Molotov cocktails at the Israeli forces. Something they tried to climb the fence and enter Israeli territory. The responses of the soldiers to distance the rioters from the fence sometimes resulted in the wounding or even killing of rioters. **As time passed the number of rioters declined to dozens**. The riots still occur but **less frequently and with far fewer participants than initially**.

23. **In ITIC assessment the riots may be "popular" but they are not spontaneous**. Calls go out throughout the Gaza Strip for Palestinians to participate and sometimes busses are provided for transportation to riot sites. **Hamas probably has not organized the riots but allows them so that frustrated local residents can let off steam and to show solidarity with the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria**.

24. On the other hand, Hamas also ensures that the riots near the border do not spin out of control and turn into violent clashes between Hamas and the IDF. In most instances Hamas security force or military wing operatives have gone to the riot sites and overseen the events, sometimes evacuating rioters if the situation warrants. On occasion Hamas' security forces erect barriers to keep additional rioters from reaching the border.

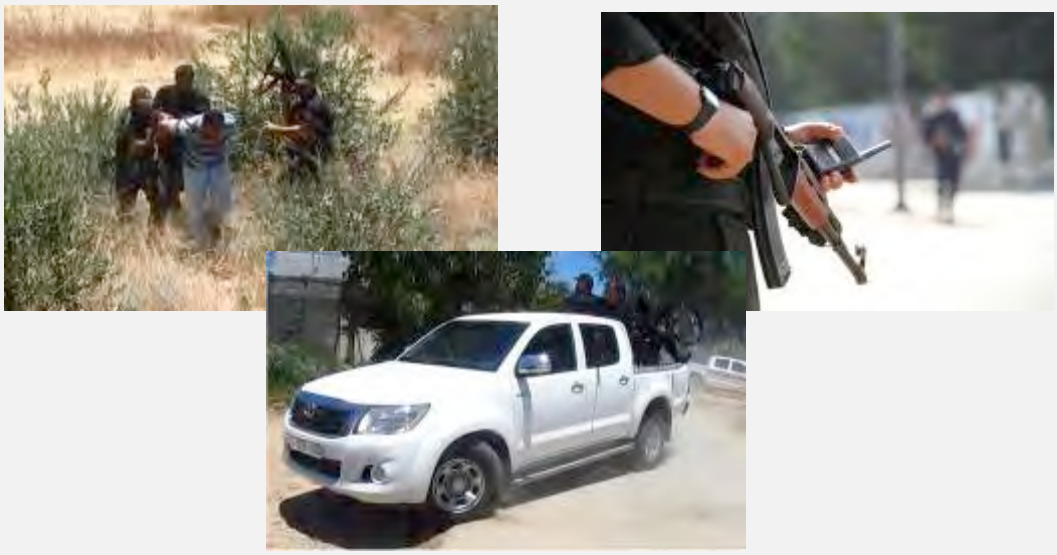


Palestinians throw stones at an IDF force near the border security fence in the Jabalia region (Paldf, December 5, 2014).

Palestinians throw stones and burn tires near the border security fence west of Nahal Oz (Facebook page of Quds.net, November 20, 2015).

Attempts of Gazan Civilians to Infiltrate into Israel

25. Since the end of Operation Protective Edge **there has been an increase in the number of attempts made by Gazan civilians to cross the border from the Gaza Strip into Israe**l. In most incidences they have been unarmed civilians not affiliated with terrorist activity. Generally speaking they try to enter Israel because of **financial distress or mental problems**. In some instances armed Palestinians have been captured. Some of the attempts have ended with the wounding or deaths of the would-be Palestinian infiltrators.



Hamas' restraint force simulates the detention of a would-be infiltrator into Israeli territory (Website of the ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, June 17, 2013).

Handling of Terrorist Networks in Judea and Samaria from the Gaza Strip

Overview

26. Hamas has been careful, since the end of Operation Protective Edge, to preserve the calm in the Gaza Strip and restrains rogue organizations trying to carry out terrorist attacks in violation of its policies. On the other hand, **it establishes terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, encourages them to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel and publicly encourages terrorism**. Most of its **efforts to establish networks** have been **prevented by the Israeli and PA intelligence services**. However, on a number of occasions terrorist operatives handled by Hamas have carried out terrorist attacks. During the past year the **most prominent was the detonation of an IED on a bus in Jerusalem** (on April 19, 2016, wounding 21 people).

27. In the absence of a central Hamas headquarters in Judea and Samaria, **most of the networks are handled from the Gaza Strip or intermediary countries such as Turkey, Jordan and Qatar.**[6] From there they recruit operatives and handle the networks. The handlers include terrorists from the Gaza Strip (some of whom were released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and expelled to the Gaza Strip), Hamas operatives living abroad and even Hamas terrorists serving prison terms in Israeli jails. Communications between external handlers and terrorists in Judea and Samaria are carried out via the Internet or designated cell phones. **Some of the operatives received military training in the Gaza Strip and others received theoretical instructions online**. Most of the Hamas terrorist networks have been located in **Hebron, Nablus, Qalqilya and the east Jerusalem and Ramallah areas**.

28. **The funds transferred from the Gaza Strip to terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria are important for establishing networks and initiating terrorist attacks**. The money is carried by Palestinians with **permits to enter Israel** (such as businessmen or patients needing medical treatment). In some cases **meetings abroad are set up** for the transfer of funds. **Turkey and Jordan are the favored countries** because geographically they are close to the Gaza Strip and it is relatively easy to fabricate a cover story for trips to both of them.

[6] For further information, see the August 4, 2015 bulletin, "Handling Hamas networks in Judea and Samaria from abroad as part of Hamas's effort to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel," http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20852

29. A recent instance (August 31, 2016) of the prevention of the transfer of funds from the Gaza Strip to Judea and Samaria was the affair of **Bashir Muhammad Yunes Mustafa**, a Palestinian merchant from the Gaza Strip. He was detained at the Erez crossing and during interrogation **confessed to having transferred $50,000 to Hamas operatives in Hebron**. He said a Hamas operative on the Gazan side of the Erez crossing **asked him to transfer the funds because he had a permit to enter Israel on business** (Facebook page in Arabic of the Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories, September 1, 2016).

Bashir Muhammad Yunes Mustafa, Gazan merchant detained at the Erez crossing for smuggling funds to Hamas terrorist operatives in Hebron (Facebook page in Arabic of the Israeli coordinator for government activities in the territories, September 1, 2016).

Exposure of Hamas Networks in Judea and Samaria

30. During the past two years the Israeli security forces have exposed **a number of Hamas networks in Judea and Samaria handled from the Gaza Strip, whose operatives were at various stages of preparing terrorist attacks**. Some of the more prominent were the following (Israel Security Agency reports):

a. **In June 2016 a Gazan from Beit Lahia was detained at the Tarqumia crossing**. He was a courier who brought funds to Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria. **He had a permit to enter Israel to conduct business** and had been asked by Hamas operatives to smuggle money for Hamas into Judea and Samaria. **He hid the money in his shoes**. Before his capture he had, on a number of occasions, brought €50,000 from the Gaza Strip for Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria.

b. **In December 2015 operatives of a Hamas terrorist network in the Abu Dis region (east Jerusalem) were detained**. **They were handled by Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives in the Gaza Strip.** They were directed to carry out terrorist attacks, including **showcase attacks,** against Israel. Following the exposure of the network 25 operatives were detained, most of them students at Abu Dis University. **The network was headed by Jamal Musa Azzam from Qalqilya, who kept in constant contact with his handlers in the Gaza Strip and had been trained by them to make explosive belts and IEDs**. Following instructions from his handlers, **he recruited students from Abu Dis University to carry out suicide bombing attacks in Israel**. **Two of them were Israeli Arabs**. One of them confessed to having **agreed to carry out a suicide bombing attack in Israel using either an explosive belt or a car bomb**.

Materials and equipment found in a laboratory for manufacturing explosives of the terrorist network exposed in Abu Dis in east Jerusalem (Website of the Israel Security Agency, December 23, 2015).

c. **On July 2015 the Israeli security forces exposed a Hamas military network in the village of Silwad (north of Ramallah)**. Its operatives were involved in the shooting attack near the community of Shvut Rachel (north of Ramallah) on June 29, 2015. The attack killed Malachi Rosenfeld and wounded three young men. Two days before the attack the network operatives shot at an Israeli ambulance. During interrogation they confessed to being **handled by a Hamas operative in Jordan named Ahmed al-Najar**, from the village of Silwad. He had been imprisoned in Israel, **released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and expelled to the Gaza Strip. He moved from there to Jordan, and handled the Hamas terrorist network from there**.

d. **In June 2015 the Israeli security forces exposed a conduit for the transfer of funds from Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip to Judea and Samaria**. They detained a woman named **Sanaa Muhammad Hussein Hafi**, 43, who lived in Nuseirat in the Gaza Strip. For a number of years she had used various methods to transfer **hundreds of thousands of dollars** from Hamas to her brother, a **Hamas operative imprisoned in Israel**. **Sanaa Hafi said that the money was transferred from the Hamas-affiliated al-Nur Society, which gives money to its imprisoned operatives and to the families those killed or wounded**.[7] She used moneychangers because of the difficulty involved in using the institutional banking system.

e. **In May 2015** the Israel Police Force reported the detention of **a dentist from the Kafr Kana in Israel**. He was suspected of **transferring large sums of money to Hamas networks in Judea and Samaria**, following instructions from **a Hamas operative in the Gaza Strip** (Website of the Israel Police Force, May 5, 2015).

f. **In April 2015** the Israeli security forces exposed **a channel for transferring money from Hamas in the Gaza Strip to Judea and Samaria through Jordan**. Following the exposure, three operatives involved in the money transfer were detained, one of them a man from Hebron who lived in Jordan. The investigation of the three revealed that **they were supposed to establish a channel for bringing terrorist funds from senior Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip to operatives in Judea and Samaria**. The funds were transferred to an operative in Hebron who was supposed to deposit the money in Jordan and later transfer it to Judea and Samaria and give it to a Palestinian lawyer living in Hebron. **The channel would enable Hamas to transfer large sums from the Gaza Strip through Jordan to terrorist operatives in Hebron and Bethlehem**. The funds were earmarked for strengthening Hamas' terrorist networks and promoting their activities.

g. **In March 2015 a six-man Hamas squad was exposed in Qalqilya**. The operatives planned to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel. Raw materials used in

[7] The **al-Nur Society** is a charitable society affiliated with Hamas that operates in the Gaza Strip with the objective of helping prisoners and their families, and the families of shaheeds. Senior Hamas officials were involved in its establishment and activities, including Hamas senior leaders Ahmad al-Jaabari and Salah Shehadeh. The society was closed by the Palestinian Authority and reopened under a new name, the al-Nur Society for the Care of Prisoners and the Families of Shaheeds. Due to its affiliation with Hamas, the al-Nur Society was outlawed in Israel by Israel's defense minister and the head of the IDF Central Command (2002).

the manufacture of IEDs were found in their possession. During interrogation they said **they had been recruited while in Jordan**, and that Hamas' Jordanian headquarters had been involved. **They underwent military training in the Gaza Strip and were then sent to Judea and Samaria to recruit additional operatives and acquire funds to initiate military-terrorist activities. They received instructions from Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip**.

31. **Terrorist operatives released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and expelled to the Gaza Strip are prominent** in the handling of terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria. From the Gaza Strip some of them moved (in all probability following instructions from Hamas) to various Arab-Muslim countries and settled there. Terrorists released in the Gilad Shalit deal have played important roles in handling terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, both from the Gaza Strip and from intermediary countries (**Turkey, Jordan, Qatar** and even **Saudi Arabia,** by exploiting pilgrimages to Mecca).

Hamas and Popular Terrorism ("Popular Resistance")

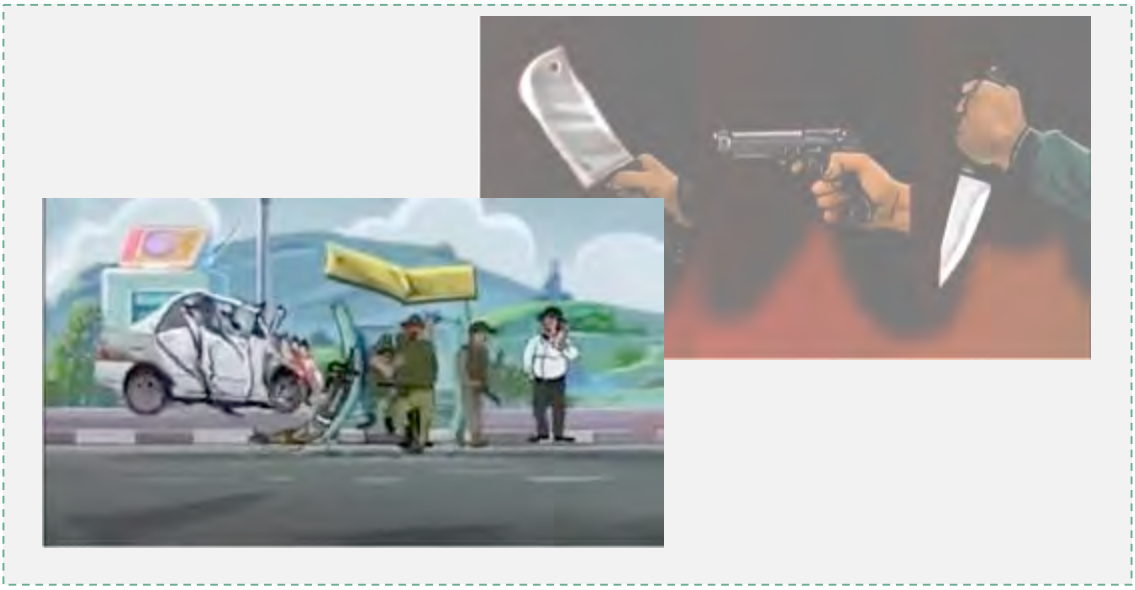
32. The wave of Palestinian terrorism in Judea, Samaria and Israel that began in September 2015 increased Hamas' motivation to turn popular terrorism (supported by the PA and Fatah) into institutionalized military-type terrorism. Although Hamas operatives had almost no involvement in the attacks, Hamas accompanied the wave of terrorism with an intensive incitement and hate propaganda campaign. Its objective was to turn the attacks into a "third intifada" (the "Jerusalem intifada"). Even though the Palestinian terrorist campaign waned after several months, Hamas still continues its incitement, repeatedly calling for the attacks to continue and increase.

33. One of the exceptional attacks carried out by Hamas operatives during the wave of Palestinian terrorism was **exploding a bomb on a #12 bus in Jerusalem on April 19, 2016**. The attack wounded 21 people. **The Israeli investigation determined that a six-man squad of Hamas operatives was behind the attack, some of whom had been imprisoned in Israel**. The squad was established to carry out a series of terrorist attacks in and around Jerusalem. **They planned suicide bombing attacks, detonating a car bomb and shooting attacks**. To carry out the attacks they recruited operatives, **among them the terrorist operative who blew up the bus, which had been planned as a suicide bombing attack** (Israel Security Agency spokesman's unit, May 29, 2016).

Hamas Incitement to Terrorism

Left: A cartoon drawn by Hamas-affiliated Omaya Joha. The Arabic reads, "How good it is. May the hand of whoever blew up the bus this afternoon be blessed. How good it is. You haven't seen anything yet...This is just a drop in the bucket...[ululations of joy]" (Twitter account of Palinfo, April 18, 2016). Right: The scene of the attack on the #12 bus in Jerusalem (Facebook page of the fire and rescue department of the Jerusalem district, April 18, 2016).

Ismail Haniyeh, senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, calls for an intensification of the "Jerusalem intifada" at a Hamas rally in Khan Yunis (Facebook page of Paldaf, January 8, 2016).



Scene from a Hamas video encouraging terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria and promising the rewards of paradise (YouTube, February 20, 2016).

A notice posted to Hamas' Facebook page. The Arabic reads, "The intifada...continues with force" (Facebook page of Palinfo, January 1, 2016). The knife symbolizes the "popular resistance," and the gun symbolizes the military-type intifada Hamas desires.

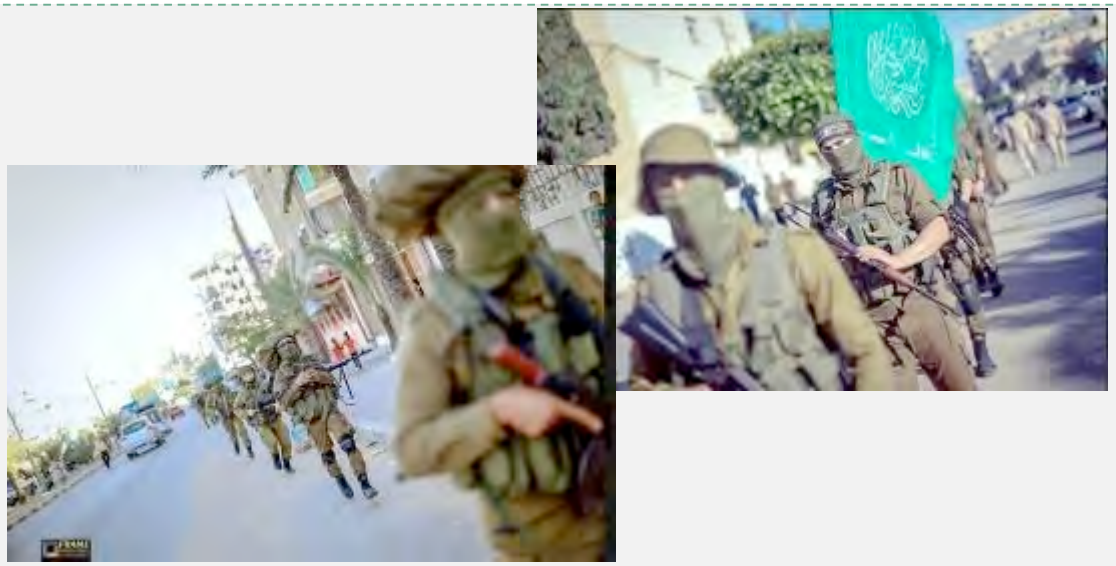
Appendix 2: Rehabilitating the Military Capabilities of Hamas and the Other Terrorist Organizations

Strategic Priority Given to Rehabilitating Military Capabilities at the Expense of Civilian Needs

1. During Operation Protective Edge Hamas' regular military order of battle included **six territorial brigades**: one each in the northern Gaza Strip, northern Gaza City, southern Gaza City, the refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip, Khan Yunis and Rafah. In addition, Hamas had elite units of several thousand ***nukhba*** **force** operatives and **naval commandos**. There were also units specializing in firing rockets and mortar shells, in aerial defense and smuggling**. Thus Hamas' total military-terrorist force numbered about 16,000 operatives, plus 16,000 security force operatives controlled by Hamas** (some of whom could be attached to Hamas' regular military force when necessary).

2. Hamas' military-security forces were **severely hit during Operation Protective Edge. Once the fighting ended, Hamas made rebuilding them its top strategic priority**. The ultimate objective was **to prepare a military force that would be capable of leading the next campaign against Israel, for which Hamas was preparing**. After Operation Protective Edge, as after previous IDF operations in the Gaza Strip, **Hamas gave focused on its military buildup at the expense of the needs of governance, especially the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and its civilian infrastructure, and the pressing needs of the Gazan civilian population**.

Hamas' Elite Nukhba Force



The nukhba force, part of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, holds a military parade in the northern Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Hamas in the Ramallah-al-Bireh district, May 5, 2016).

Picture of the nukhba unit issued by Hamas' military-terrorist wing to mark the anniversary of Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, boasting of the unit's infiltrations into Israeli territory. The Arabic reads, "The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' nukhba [unit] behind enemy lines (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, July 19, 2015).

Left: Nukhba unit operatives in a military display in the Gaza Strip (Twitter account of Muhammad al-Madhoun, July 18, 2014) Right: Nukhba operatives in a military display in Gaza City (Amin blog, December 14, 2014).

3. Hamas' strategic priority led it to **divert raw materials necessary for civilian reconstruction to the manufacture of weapons and to rebuilding the tunnel networks**. **Hamas commandeered raw materials necessary for its military needs (especially cement, iron and timber) which had been imported into the Gaza Strip for civilian use.** In some instances Hamas bought the materials from local civilians who were entitled to receive them to reconstruct their homes. In others Hamas confiscated them before delivery to civilians.[8]

4. Hamas' military buildup includes the following:

Replenishing Stocks of Weapons and Ammunition

5. **On the eve of Operation Protective Edge Hamas had about 11,000 rockets. Most of them were short-range rockets** (up to 20 kilometers, about 12.4 miles) **and some long-range rockets** (up to 160 kilometers, about 99.4 miles). More than 4,500 were fired into Israeli territory and several thousand were damaged or destroyed in Israeli aerial strikes. **Thus at the end of the operation Hamas had about one third of its original quantity of rockets**. Replenishing the stock of rockets and rocket-launchers, the most important weapons in the campaign against Israel, is considered by Hamas as **its top priority**.

[8] For example, the investigation of **Khaled Lubad**, a Gazan merchant, revealed that **of 100 sacks of cement earmarked for the reconstruction of an average house, Hamas delivered five or six sacks to the Gazan civilians and appropriated the rest for military purposes** (Website of the Israel Security Agency, July 26, 2015).

6. **Hamas found it more difficult to renew its arsenal after Operation Protective Edge** than after other IDF operations in the Gaza Strip. That was primarily the result of the Egyptian security forces' extensive anti-tunnel activities, part of their campaign against ISIS's province in the Sinai Peninsula. Because of **the collaboration between Hamas' military-terrorist wing and ISIS's Sinai Province,** the Egyptians made an effort to cut the Gaza Strip off from the Sinai Peninsula. To that end the **Egyptian security forces sealed the Rafah crossing almost hermetically and destroyed most of the smuggling tunnels** along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border.

7. **The Egyptian activities had serious consequences for weapons' smuggling into the Gaza Strip and forced Hamas and the other terrorist organizations to focus on manufacturing weapons themselves**. They focused on **manufacturing rockets**, implementing technical and operational lessons learned during Operation Protective Edge. One manifestation of **the intensive manufacturing process is the large number of test rockets that have been fired into the sea during the past two years,** which Hamas has made no effort to hide.[9]

[9] On July 2, 2016, the website of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades posted an op-ed piece written by **Ibrahim al-Madhoun**, a Hamas activist who heads Hamas' Al-Mustaqbal Research Center in the Gaza Strip. He wrote that **the number of test rockets fired by Hamas had risen since Operation Protective Edge**. **Yahya Musa**, a member of Hamas' legislate council, claimed it was **"the right" of the "resistance" [i.e., terrorist organizations] to arm itself, build an arsenal and test its weapons.** He claimed the agreement reached at the end of Operation Protective Edge did not prevent it (Al-Arabi, December 9, 2014).

8. At rallies and military displays in the Gaza Strip during the past two years **Hamas has boasted about its newly-developed long-range rockets, which can reach Tel Aviv and Haifa. in all probability Hamas continues to develop them**. Hamas publications are aimed to deter Israel and raise the morale of the Gazans. However, most of Hamas' efforts are apparently invested in replenishing its arsenal of short- and medium-range rockets and mortar shells. **Based on lessons learned from Operation Protective Edge, Hamas' objective in the next clash will be to disrupt the daily lives of Israelis living in the western Negev** and the activities of IDF forces deployed near the Gaza Strip (Hamas is of the opinion that during Operation Protective Edge it caused substantial damage to the communities near the Gaza Strip and hurt IDF soldiers deployed near the border security fence). However, in ITIC assessment **Hamas' rocket arsenal has not returned to its size on the eve of Operation Protective Edge**. In addition, the **quality of the rockets** in its current arsenal is **lower** because of the shortage of the standard explosives that had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip through the tunnels.[10]

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades show Al-Jazeera correspondents a workshop for the manufacture of J-80 rockets (YouTube, August 16, 2014). The J-80 is a long-range rocket fired at the Tel Aviv region during Operation Protective Edge. The J is for Ahmed Jaabari, the commander of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades who was killed at the beginning of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 14, 2012); 80 is for 80 kilometers (about 50 miles) from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory.

[10] In the summer of 2015, in IDF assessment Hamas was nearing the completion of renewing its arsenal of short-range rockets and mortar shells. However, according to the same source, Hamas does not yet have the same stock of medium- and long-range rockets it had on the eve of Operation Protective Edge (article by Or Heller in *Israel Defense*, July 7, 2015).

Hamas' R-160 long-range rockets. According to Hamas reports, the rocket can reach Tel Aviv and Haifa (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, April 17, 2016).

Advanced Weapons Presented by Hamas

9. On **December 14, 2014**, about four months after the end of Operation Protective Edge, Hamas held a military display in the central Gaza Strip which included its weapons. Displaying the weapons was meant to send a message of deterrence to Israel and raise the morale of the residents of the Gaza Strip. Among the weapons exhibited were **a small UAV called "al-Ababil," Sagger and Kornet anti-tank missiles and long-range rockets**.

Left: Hamas operatives present long-range rockets in the military display in the Gaza Strip. Right: Hamas operative with a Kornet missile (Filastin al-'Aan, December 14, 2014).

Left: Military display in the Gaza Strip photographed by an al-Ababil UAV in real time (Al-Ra'i, December 14, 2014). Right: Hamas operatives display an al-Ababil UAV in the military display in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Paldf, December 14, 2014).

Reconstructing the Tunnel System

10. **Hamas has two tunnel systems**: one is **contained within the Gaza Strip** and serves to hide and move operatives covertly from location to location. It is also used to store equipment and weapons, and can be used for attacks on IDF soldiers operating in the Gaza Strip. The other is **a system of attack tunnels** that **cross the border into Israeli territory**, **bypassing the border security fence** and ongoing IDF security activities. **The objective of entering Israeli territory** is **to take over IDF posts or attack IDF patrols, and take IDF soldiers as hostages, alive or dead, to the Gaza Strip, to use them as bargaining chips. Another objective is to enter Israeli territory to carry out showcase attacks in Israeli communities near the border**.

11. The attack tunnels are **particularly important to Hamas,** which considers them **trump cards** for **surprising Israel in the next clash and making practical gains and propaganda capital** greater than those made in Operation Protective Edge.[11] In Israeli security source assessment, **at the beginning of Operation Protective Edge Hamas had 32 attack tunnels, about a third of which crossed the border and had shafts inside Israeli territory**. There are probably also tunnels in Israeli territory which were not discovered (Amos Harel for Haaretz, January 12, 2016; Ynet, July 10, 2016). Tunnels were also dug by the **PIJ**, although fewer than Hamas.

[11] During Operation Protective Edge on several occasions Hamas tried to infiltrate the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip using attack tunnels. The IDF prevented the attacks.

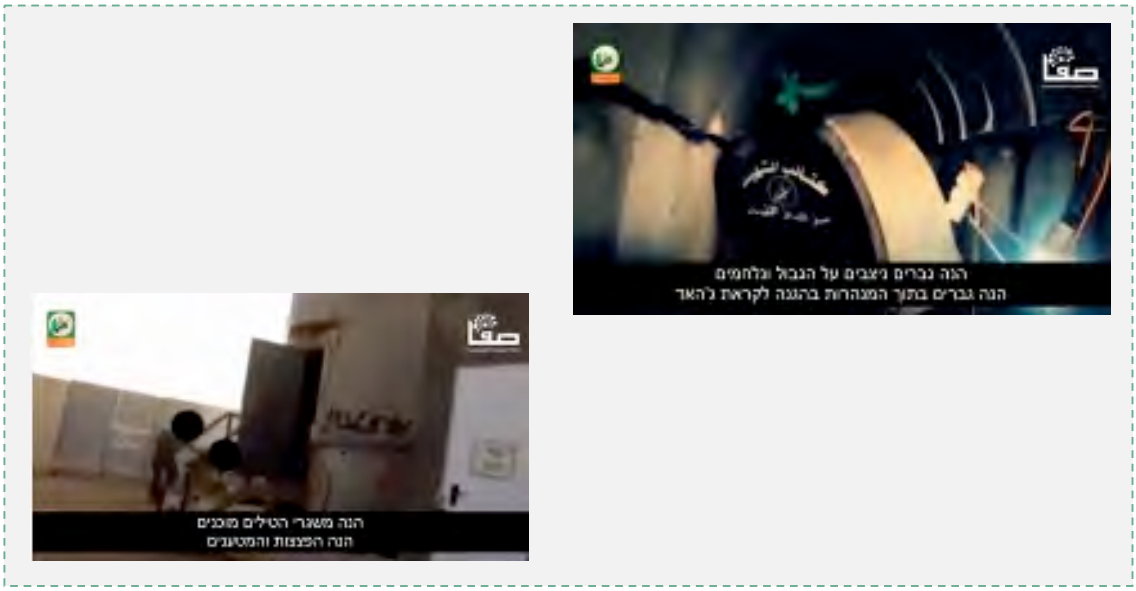
12. In ITIC assessment **the tunnel project is a high Hamas priority, in which it invests large sums of money**[12] **and considerable man power**.[13] According to Hamas, a "tunnel unit" was formed. **Hamas supplies materials that are hard to obtain** (cement and concrete slabs for tunnel walls), and when they are unavailable **substitutes are provided**.

13. After Hamas operative Issam **Omar Sayid al-Katanani** was killed in a tunnel collapse in Sajaiya, Hamas issued a video showing attack tunnels being dug. It showed operatives digging a tunnel and lining the walls with concrete slabs, which are difficult to obtain in the Gaza Strip (Safa, June 8, 2015). **Khalil al-Haya**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, gave a speech at al-Katanani's funeral, stressing that **Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives would continue digging tunnels, day and night**, because they were "the best weapons to defeat Israel" (Safa, June 5, 2015).

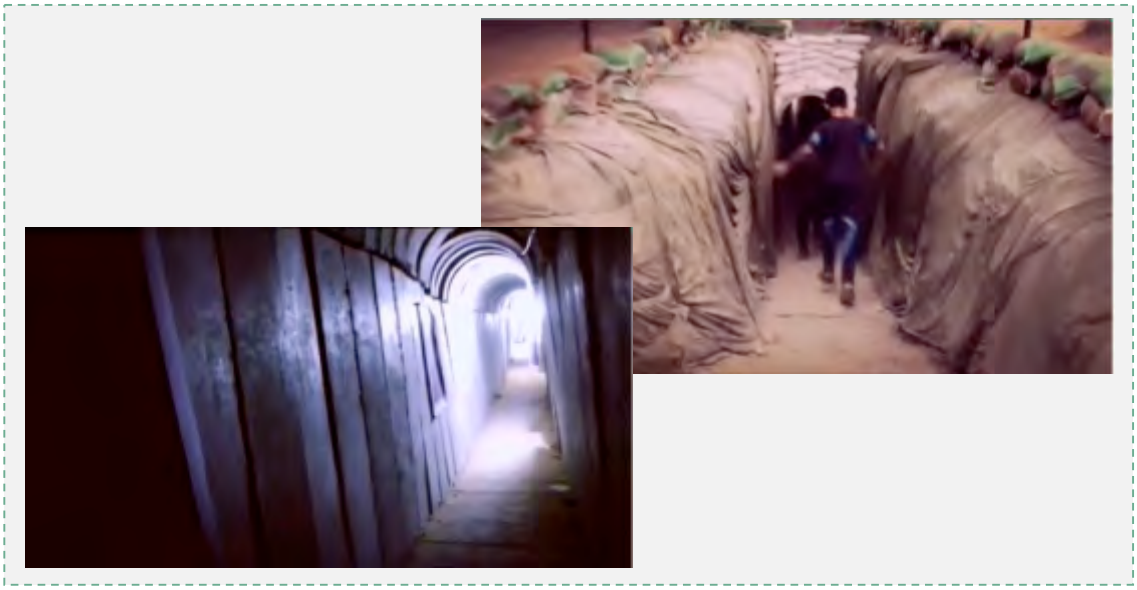
Pictures from the Hamas video of Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives digging a tunnel (with a hint indicating it was an attack tunnel). The video shows operatives setting concrete slabs in place (Safa, June 8, 2015).

[12] According to Alex Fishman in Yedioth Ahronoth, July 15, 2016, this past year **Hamas has invested between 250 million and 300 million Israeli shekels ($66.4 million and $79.7 million) in digging tunnels**. About 20% of Hamas' annual budged is devoted to its military buildup. Most of the sum is earmarked for the tunnel project.

[13] According to an article in Haaretz, April 29, 2015, 1,000 operatives work around the clock digging tunnels. The raw materials necessary for constructing the tunnels are taken from private individuals who receive them to rebuild their homes, but who are forced by economic need to sell them on the black market. When that source is not available the operatives digging tunnels use timber and rigid plastic instead of concrete slabs.



Pictures from the Hamas video.



A tunnel in the Sajaiya neighborhood in the eastern part of Gaza City opened to Gazans and the media. It was exposed on July 19, 2016, to mark the second anniversary of Operation Protective Edge (YouTube, July 19, 2016).

14. **The intensive tunnel digging and lack of raw materials have, on many occasions, led to the killing and wounding of Hamas operatives**, among them nukhba unit operatives: on January 27, 2016, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades reported it had lost contact with a tunnel unit squad when a tunnel collapsed. The following day Hamas reported the deaths of seven Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives north of Gaza City. According to the report they were part of a team of 11 operatives renovating an old tunnel. Three of the seven were *nukhba* operatives (Al-Aqsa, January 28, 2016). At the beginning of February 2016 Hamas media reported the death of **Faid 'Ashur and Ahmed al-Zahar** (nephew of senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Zahar). The two were killed when a tunnel collapsed in the southern

Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website and Paldf, February 2 and 3, 2016).

Ahmed al-Zahar and Faid 'Ashur, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives killed in a tunnel collapse in the southern Gaza Strip (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, February 2, 2016).

15. In April and May 2016 several Hamas terrorist operatives were detained in Israeli territory after having infiltrated from the Gaza Strip. During interrogation they revealed information about Hamas' tunnel project. One of them, 17 years old, said he was an operative in the **Beit Lahia Battalion** and that **most of his activity had been related to digging tunnels**. He said Hamas was establishing an extensive network of combat tunnels inside the Gaza Strip. The tunnels had **many openings, some of them near civilian structures such as schools, mosques and residential buildings**. He also said the **tunnel construction continued even though Hamas was aware of Israel's efforts to prevent it** (Israel Security Agency, May and June year).

PIJ Tunnel-Digging

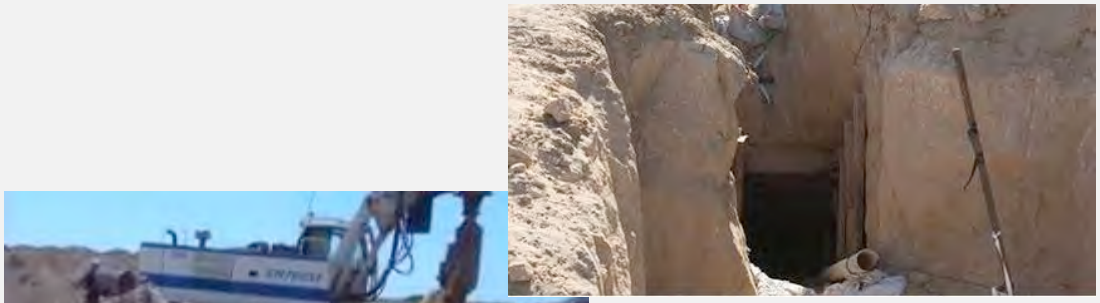
16. The **PIJ** also digs tunnels, although on a much smaller scale. The organization allowed an al-Jazeera correspondent to visit a tunnel, interview operatives and write a report (YouTube, September 9, 2014):

Upper left: Al-Jazeera correspondent. Upper right: Tunnel-digging by PIJ operative. Bottom: PIJ operative, part of a tunnel-digging squad (YouTube, September 9, 2014).

Exposing Tunnel Shafts in Israeli Territory

17. **Do Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have attack tunnels whose shafts open into Israel, and if so, how many do they have?** We do not know the answer. However, in April and May **2016 the Israeli security forces exposed two tunnel shafts in Israeli territory** near the border security fence. It is unclear whether they were newly-dug tunnels or left after Operation Protective Edge. In ITIC assessment they were an indication of Hamas' tunnel-digging capabilities and possibly of the progress that has been made in building new attack tunnels.

18. In **April 2016** the IDF, using advanced technology, located the shaft of a border-crossing Hamas attack tunnel. **It was discovered in Israeli territory several dozen yards from the border security fence** in the central Gaza Strip. It was probably meant to be used by the *nukhba* unit for a showcase attack. **In Israeli security source assessment the tunnel was dug after Operation Protective Edge. IDF activities to destroy the tunnel lasted two weeks**.



Left: The IDF destroys the tunnel. Right: Tunnel shaft uncovered in April 2016 (IDF Spokesman, April 18, 2016).

19. **At the beginning of May 2016 the Israeli security forces uncovered an attack tunnel 30 meters below the surface of the ground. It crossed the border into Israeli territory in the area of the southern Gaza Strip**. IDF forces located the tunnel route and destroyed it. The Hamas military-terrorist wing issued an announcement (of doubtful reliability) claiming it was the first tunnel used in Operation Protective Edge to infiltrate Israeli territory, on July 17, 2014 (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, May 5, 2016).

The shaft of the second tunnel exposed by the IDF on the southern Gaza Strip border (IDF Spokesman, May 5, 2016).

Strengthening the Naval Commando of Hamas

Hamas' naval commando unit in a military display in Gaza on December 14, 2014 (Filastin al-'Aan, December 14, 2014).

20. **Hamas considered the activity of the naval commando in the area of the community of Zikim** (north of the Gaza Strip) during Operation Protective Edge as successful. One of the lessons Hamas learned from the operation was the importance of naval commando capabilities in bringing the fighting behind Israeli lines. The training given the naval commandos indicates that in the next round of fighting **operatives will be sent to Israeli territory by sea to attack IDF forces and Israeli communities, and possibly to abduct Israelis**.

21. In the two years since the end of Operation Protective Edge **Hamas and the other terrorist organizations have held intensive activities to strengthen their naval commando units**. They conduct training exercises, purchase large amounts of diving and underwater combat equipment, and apparently their order of battle has been enlarged (Hamas' naval units today number several hundred operatives). According to Israeli military sources, Hamas' naval commando unit has equipment that will allow operatives to **swim underwater for longer distances more quickly** (Ynet, August 20, 2015).

22. **Acquisition**: In June 2016 an Israeli security examination at the Kerem Shalom crossing prevented Hamas **from smuggling dozens of diving suits into the Gaza Strip for its naval commando unit.** They were camouflaged as sports clothing imported from abroad by a supplier in the PA (Israeli crossings authority unit, June 20 2016).

The diving suits found camouflaged as sports clothing (Israeli crossings authority unit, June 20 2016).

23. **Training**:

A. In **August 2016** Israel revealed that funds from an international aid organization had been used for several purposes, including the construction of **a maritime training site for the naval commando unit of Hamas' military-terrorist wing**. It was constructed with funds donated by World Vision, an international humanitarian aid organization, transferred to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades by a Palestinian World Vision employee recruited by Hamas.

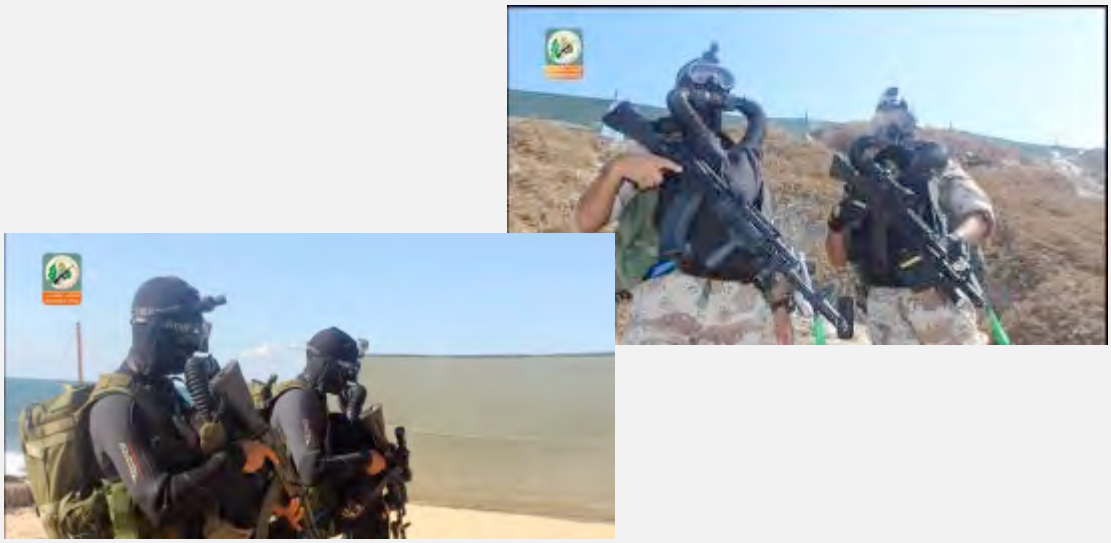
The Hamas naval unit's training site, constructed with funds transferred to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades by a Palestinian employee of World Vision (IDF Spokesman, August 2016).

B. In **September 2015** the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades reported that **Saher Nabil Sayid al-Bahri**, 27, from Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, an operative in its naval commando unit, had "drowned in a freak accident" on the

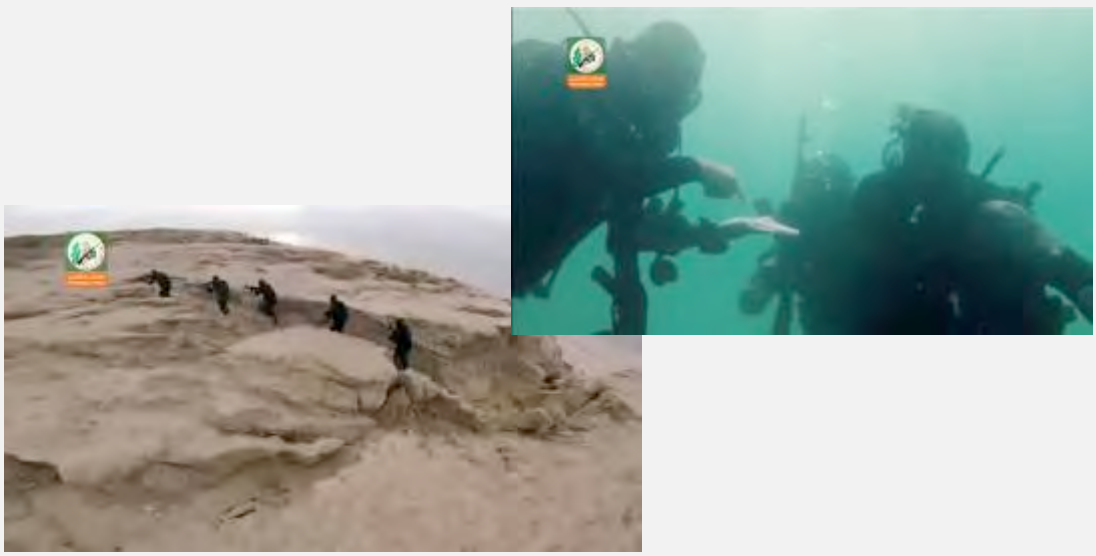
Beit Lahia shore (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, September 6, 2015). It was apparently a naval commando unit training accident.

Saher al-Bahri, Hamas naval commando, who died in a training accident (Hamas website, September 6, 2015).

C. In **December 2014** the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued pictures of its naval commando unit in training. The operatives simulated **infiltrating Israel from the sea and capturing an IDF post** (YouTube, December 14, 2014):



Operatives of the naval commando unit



Left: Operatives emerging from the sea. Right: Operatives arriving by sea.

Hamas' naval commando unit simulates capturing an IDF post

The Naval Commandos of Other Terrorist Organizations

24. **Other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip have followed Hamas' lead and strengthened their own naval commandos**. In September 2015 the Jerusalem Brigades (the PIJ's military-terrorist wing) reported the death by drowning of **Muhammad Ja'afar Shahin**. Muhammad Shahin was an operative in the al-Daraj battalion of the PIJ's Gaza brigade. He apparently died in an accident while training with the **Jerusalem Brigades' naval commando unit** (Facebook page of the Jerusalem Brigades, September 3, 2015).

The naval commando unit of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Facebook page of the National Resistance Brigades, November 15, 2015).

Intensive Training in the Gaza Strip

Overview

25. **Since the end of Operation Protective Edge the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades has conducted intensive training**. Military training has also been conducted by the security forces operating in the Gaza Strip and the various terrorist organizations. One objective of the training is **to bring the new recruits and operatives in existing units to a level of basic military fitness**. **Another is to train operatives in specific operational areas for the next campaign against Israel, based on the experience gained in Operation Protective Edge**.

26. Both the *nukhba* unit and Hamas' ordinary military units **emphasize training in the use of the attack tunnels**. Their training simulates **infiltrating Israeli territory**, **attacking an IDF post** (usually one near the border) **or IDF patrol, killing the soldiers** and destroying their weapons. Afterwards the attacking force **returns through the tunnels to the Gaza Strip with the IDF soldiers or bodies, to be used as bargaining chips for the release of Palestinian prisoners**. In all probability they also train **in infiltrating Israeli civilian communities for mass-killing attacks**, but Hamas and the other terrorist organizations do not publicize it.

Hamas Training

27. Hamas training is conducted in facilities located for the most part near the border with Israel, on the locations of the Israeli communities evacuated when Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip.

A model of an Israeli tank constructed by Hamas for training purposes and photographed at one of its training facilities in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of QudsN, May 12, 2015).

Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training facility near the border security fence (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, March 14, 2015).

28. The training receives broad media coverage to send messages to both Israel and the population of the Gaza Strip: **Israel** is warned that **Hamas is rebuilding and improving its military-terrorist capabilities**. For the Gaza Strip, the coverage is meant to lift the morale of the civilian population and the military operatives, and to show that Hamas and the other terrorist organizations are preparing for the next confrontation with Israel.

29. The following are examples of training exercises held by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the nukhba unit:

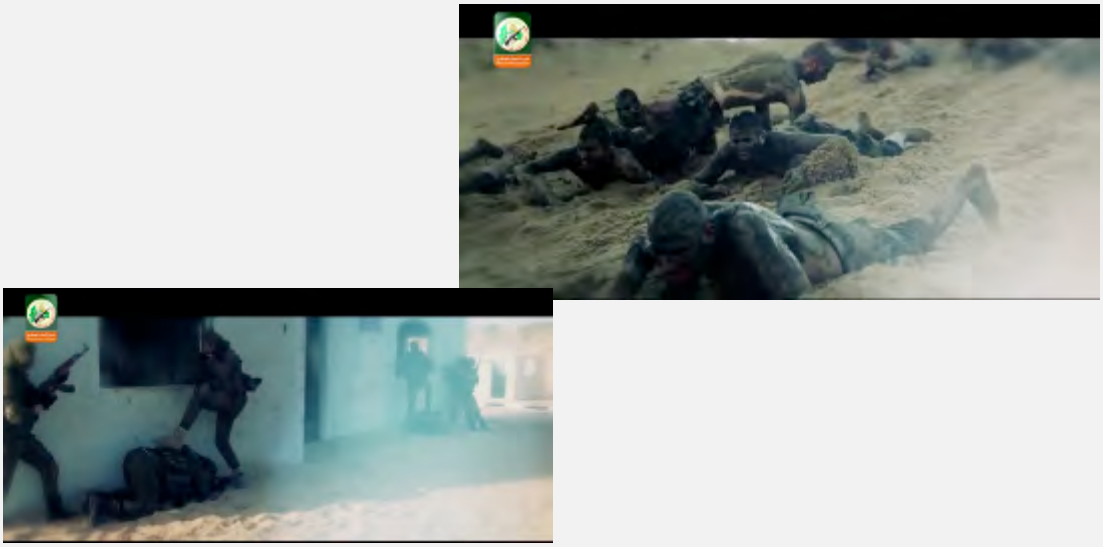
A. On **August 15, 2016**, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued a video documenting ***nukhba* unit training.** It showed them receiving basic training:

crawling, attacking and shooting, camouflage and urban warfare (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, August 15, 2016).

Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives simulate the capture an IDF post, kill the soldiers and take their bodies. An Israeli flag flies over a guard tower in the middle of the picture (Filastin al-'Aan, December 27, 2014).

Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives simulate dragging the body of an IDF soldier from the post they captured (Filastin al-'Aan, December 27, 2014).

B. At **the end of October 2015**, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued a video of *nukhba* unit training. **The operatives simulated capturing IDF posts**. Two of them had the names of the posts written in Hebrew (YouTube, October 26, 2015):



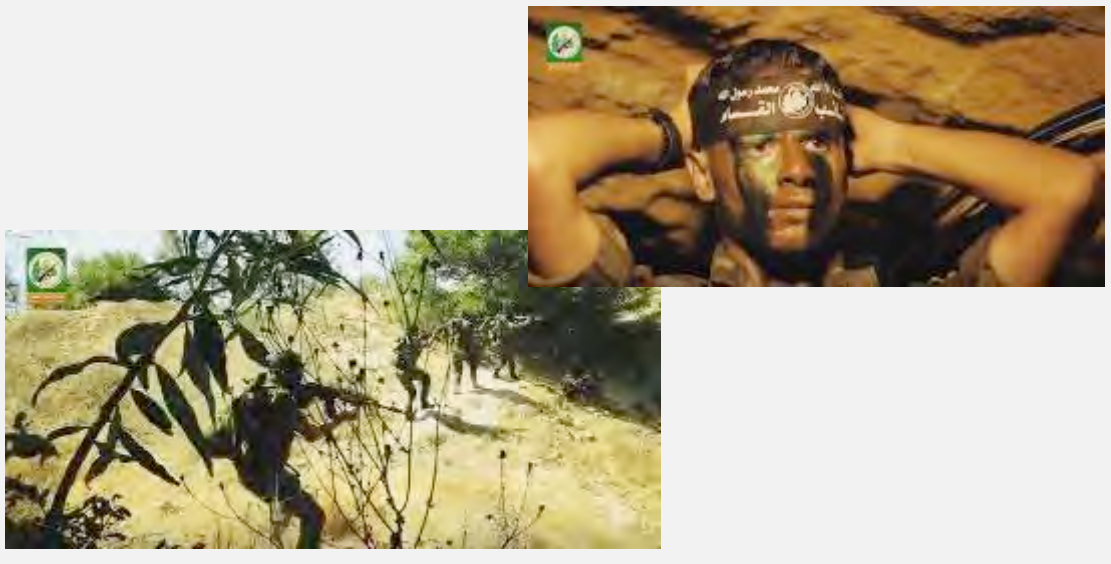
Pictures from the nukhba unit training video (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, August 15, 2016).

C. On **December 27, 2014**, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued a video to show the reconstruction of its military capabilities after Operation Protective Edge. It showed dozens of armed operatives **simulating attacks on IDF posts near the border security fence**. In one simulated attack **operatives abducted an IDF soldier from a post**. In another, **operatives captured a post and took the bodies of soldiers they had killed** (Filastin al-'Aan, December 27, 2014).

Simulated fighting in an IDF post

Left: Capturing an IDF post. Right: Simulated fighting in an IDF post.

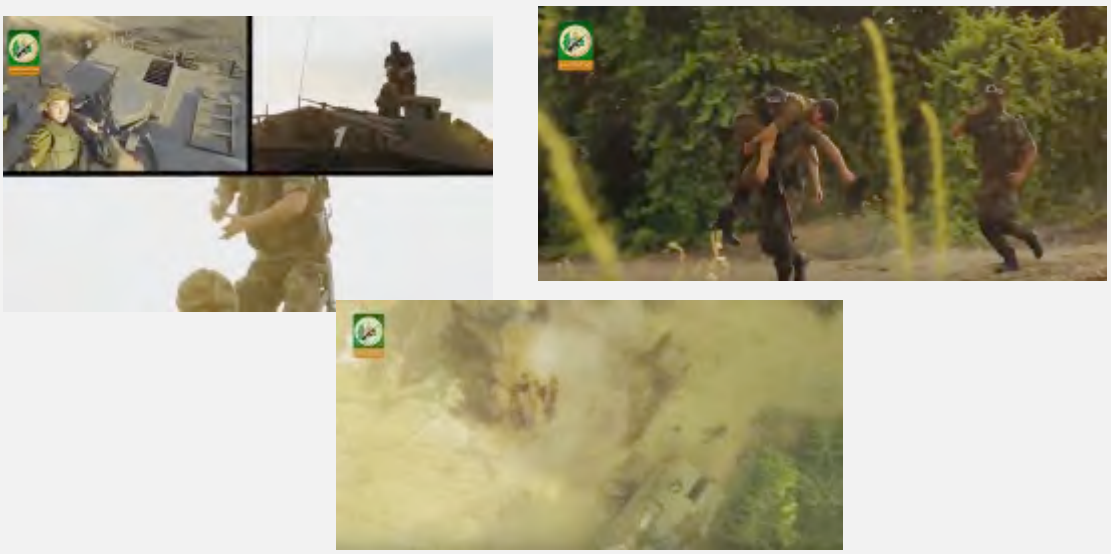
30. On **September 1, 2016**, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued a propaganda video about abducting an IDF soldier. It began with an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operative digging a tunnel. Then a number of operatives emerged from the tunnel equipped with GoPro© cameras to document the attack.[14] After that Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives fired mortar shells at two Israel tanks. They then rushed the tanks, killed the Israeli soldiers, abducted one and return to the Gaza Strip through the tunnel. After that they fired more mortar shells at the tanks (YouTube, September 1, 2016):



Pictures from the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades propaganda video. Left: Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades terrorist operatives emerge from a tunnel to attack Israeli tanks. Right: An Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operative prepares for a military action. (YouTube, September 1, 2016).

[14] For Hamas, documenting activity in Israeli territory is important in the battle for hearts and minds. During Operation Protective Edge Hamas documented the "pillbox operation" at Nahal Oz, July 28, 2014.

Left: Assaulting IDF tanks. Right: An Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operative prepares mortars for firing at IDF tanks.



Upper left: Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives kill one of the IDF tank crew. Upper right: An IDF soldier is abducted from a tank. Lower picture: Hamas operatives fire mortar shells at IDF tanks.

Security Force Training

31. The security forces controlled by Hamas have also undergone intensive training since the end of Operation Protective Edge. Such training clearly indicates the **military nature of the forces.** It suggests that **preserving public order is not their only function**, but that as in the past, during emergencies **Hamas will use them as a military force**:

A. On **August 14, 2016**, Hamas' security forces launched a military course for company commanders. It was held in Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades military facilities in Rafah and Khan Yunis (Website of the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, August 14, 2016).

National security force operatives undergo clearly military training (Website of the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, June 2 and August 14, 2016).

B. On **June 2, 2016**, at the graduation exercises of a course given to national security force commanders, participants simulated attacking an IDF patrol, physically attacking the soldiers and abducting a soldier a gun-point (Website of the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, June 2, 2016).

C. On **December 15, 2015**, a training course was held for forty battalion commanders of Hamas security forces. It included shooting and urban warfare.

Pictures from the training course for security force company commanders (Website of the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, December 15, 2015).

D. On **September 6, 2015**, a Hamas national security force[15] unit in Rafah carried out a military exercise using live ammunition. It was the second such

[15] Hamas' national security force unit is an important internal security service in the Gaza Strip. It was under PA control but Hamas reestablished it when it took over the Gaza Strip in 2007. The main mission of

exercise simulating **a night raid on an IDF base inside Israeli territory** (Website of the Hamas-controlled ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip, September 7, 2015).

E. On **December 23, 2014**, the national security force unit held an exercise at the end of an officers' training course. It was held in an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training facility in the southern Gaza Strip. The exercise simulated **attacking and capturing an Israeli post.**

National security force operatives on their way to "an Israeli post." An Israeli flag can be seen flying it (Al-Aqsa TV video posted to YouTube, December 23, 2014).

Training Provided by the Other Terrorist Organizations

32. The military-terrorist wings of other terrorist organizations also conduct intensive military training, sometimes jointly. For example, in March 2016 terrorist operatives from the DFLP and Fatah trained together. The exercise was held in a training facility west of Rafah. **The rocket-launching units displayed their capabilities, there were shooting exercises, explosives demonstrations and simulations of raiding and blowing up IDF posts and abducting Israeli soldiers** (Facebook page of the National Resistance Battalions, March 26, 2016).

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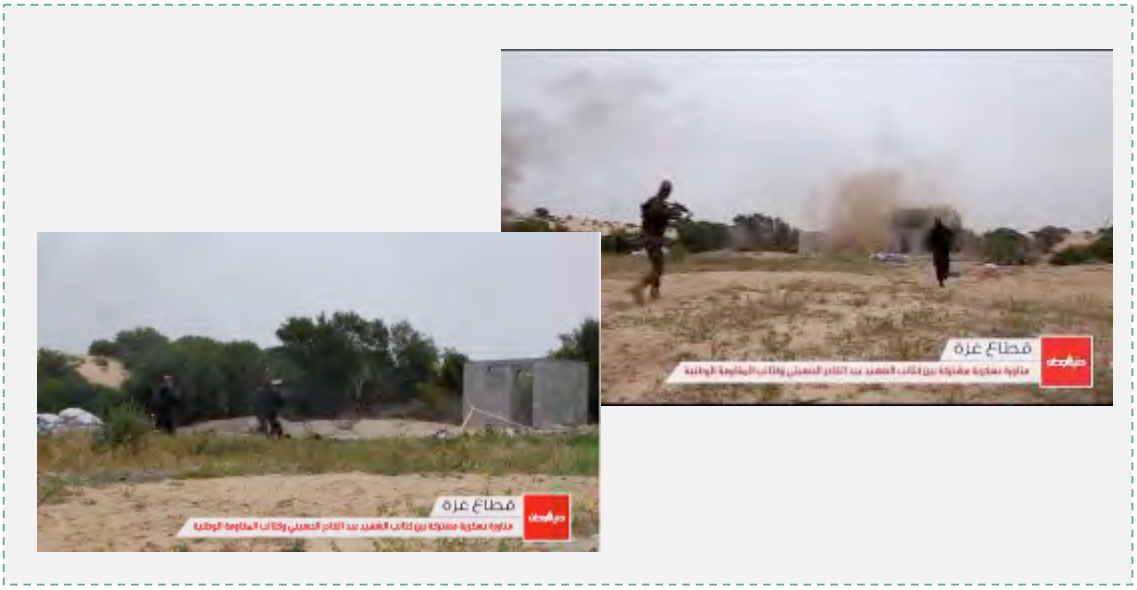
the national security forces is to control the Gaza Strip border and the crossings. Their extensive connections with the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, has led to close collaboration between them. National security force operatives have been involved in military activities against Israel.



Joint DFLP-Fatah military training simulating the capture and destruction of an IDF post (YouTube, March 26, 2016).

33. In **April 2015** a joint military exercise was held by Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Fatah's military-terrorist wing in the Gaza Strip) and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) in a training camp in the northern Gaza Strip. It included **simulating the capture of IDF posts and attacking IDF armored vehicles** (Alarab24 and YouTube, April 22, 2015).

Exercise held by Fatah and PRC operatives in the northern Gaza Strip (Alarab24, April 22, 2015)

34. Additional examples of terrorist organization exercises are the following:

A. On **May 29, 2015, the DFLP military-terrorist wing** held a graduation ceremony at a training camp near Rafah. It was attended by senior organization figures who watched the graduates carry out various exercises. They included **attacking IDF posts and abducting Israeli soldiers**, launching mortar shells

and detonating bombs (Website and Facebook page of the National Resistance Brigades, May 29, 2015).

Left: Simulation of the detonation of an IDF tank. Right: Simulation of the abduction of an Israeli soldier from an IDF post (marked with an Israeli flag) (Facebook page of the National Resistance Battalions, May 29, 2015).

B. On **April 17, 2015**, a DFLP National Resistance Battalions officers' training course ended. At the graduation ceremony the participants simulated **capturing IDF posts, detonating IEDs and abducting Israeli soldiers** (Facebook page of the National Resistance Brigades, April 28, 2015).

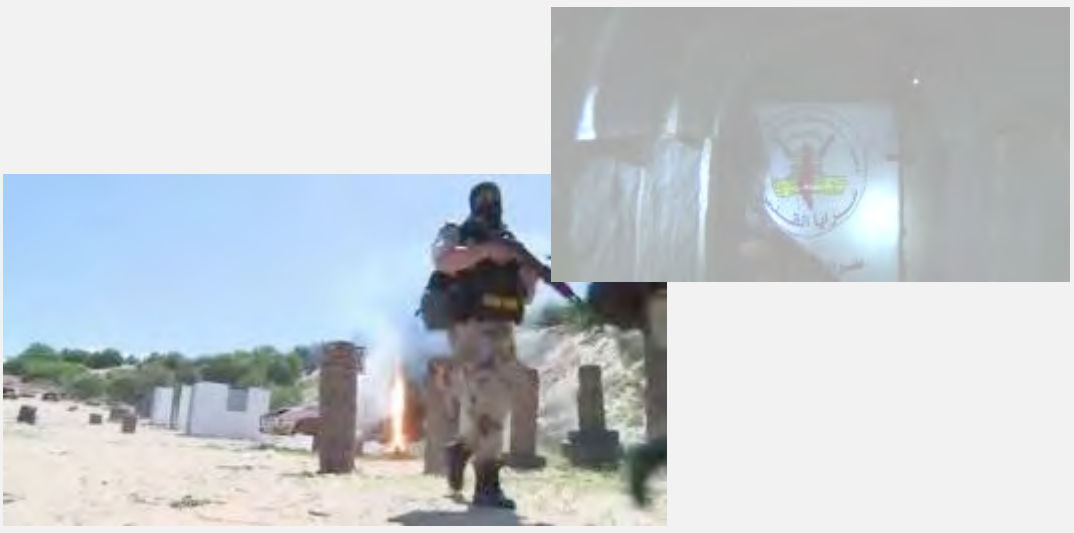
DFLP National Resistance Battalions operatives simulate capturing an IDF post and abducting an Israeli soldier (Facebook page of the National Resistance Brigades, April 18, 2015).

C. On **April 8, 2015**, **the National Resistance Battalions (the DFLP's military-terrorist wing)** conducted a training exercise at one of the organization's sites near Rafah. Exercises included capturing an IDF post and **abducting an Israeli**

soldier (Facebook page of the National Resistance Battalions media office, February 8, 2015).

DFLP terrorist operatives simulate an attack on an IDF post to abduct an Israeli soldier (Facebook page of the National Resistance Brigades' media office, February 8, 2015).

D. **In March 2015** a course ended for **about 50 Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade-al-Asifah Army operatives**, the military-terrorist wing of Fatah in the Gaza Strip. It was conducted in Khan Yunis. The participants trained in **ambushing Israeli soldiers and breaking into IDF posts** (Al-Mayadeen TV, March 8, 2015).



Left: Simulation of blowing up an IDF post. Right: Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade operatives walk on an Israeli flag (YouTube, March 8, 2015).

E. **In March 2015 the PIJ's Jerusalem Brigades** held an exercise in the central Gaza Strip. Several dozen operatives participated. They simulated **emerging**

from tunnels and attacking an IDF post inside Israeli territory (Al-Youm al-Sabaa, March 5, 2015).

Left: Simulation of an attack on an IDF post. Right: The PIJ's "attack tunnel" (YouTube, March 6, 2015).

Establishing Militias and Training Youth

35. In addition to raising the fighting fitness of its military-terrorist wing (Hamas' "regular" army), Hamas invests efforts to organize the civilian population as an auxiliary force to carry out security missions and to train a cadre of young Gazans who will enter its ranks in the coming years:

A. **In September 2014 Hamas began establishing militias, calling them a "popular army."** Its objective was to provide auxiliary forces for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives who could go into action in a future clash with Israel. On November 7, 2014, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades presented the "first battalion" of its "popular army," claiming it was 2,500 strong. Other terrorist organizations, such as the PIJ and the PRC, established new "popular" units, claiming they were the size of battalions. In addition to carrying out military missions the "popular armies" **were established to gain the support of the civilian population for Hamas, given the hardships faced since Operation Protective Edge**.

Young Palestinians in Hamas' "popular army" hold M-16 assault rifles and a Hamas flag at the graduation of the "first battalion" (Palinfo, November 7, 2014).

B. **On January 12, 2015, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades announced its intention to recruit Palestinians between the ages of 15 and 21, and to open training camps for them throughout the Gaza Strip on January 20** (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, January 12, 2015). Hamas claimed the camps had trained more than **17,000 youths between the ages of 15 and 17. They provided them with basic military training, specific military activities** (abducting Israeli soldiers and using the tunnels) **and religious indoctrination**. At one of the graduation ceremonies in Khan Yunis **Mahmoud al-Zahar, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, boasted that in the near future the young men in front of him would stand behind the rockets launched in the next campaign against Israel (Al-Aqsa TV and the websites of the Hamas ministry of the interior in the Gaza Strip and the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, January 29, 2015).

Adolescents practice shooting in training camps for youth in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Paldf, January 22, 2015).

Increased Hamas Military Presence along the Border with Israel

Overview

36. Less than a year after Operation Protective Edge Hamas' military-terrorist wing launched a series of building projects to **reinforce its presence along the border with Israel. It includes a line of outposts, paving a road near the border security fence and setting up observation posts**.

37. The activities were undertaken **to increase Hamas' security control over the territory along the border**. The objectives were to **increase oversight of the attempts made by rogue organizations** to fire rockets and carry out attacks in defiance of Hamas' policy of restraint; improve intelligence and surveillance of the IDF's routine security activities and improve Hamas' ability to **prevent IDF incursions into the Gaza Strip**; **increase inspection of Gazan civilians approaching the border security fence** to confront IDF forces and **prevent Gazans from infiltrating into Israeli territory**. Generally speaking their activities have been defensive, but when **Hamas feels the necessity, its military presence along the border is liable to also be turned to offensive purposes**.

Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives near the border security fence (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, March 14, 2015).

Constructing a Line of Military Outposts

38. Hamas has constructed **a line of outposts** at a distance of a few hundred meters from Israel's border security fence. It has also constructed **observation posts manned by operatives of its military-terrorist wing**.

39. Spokesmen for Hamas' military-terrorist wing boasted that the posts were **constructed to challenge Israel** and as a conclusion drawn from Operation Protective Edge (Website of Palinfo and the Facebook page of Palinfo, April 4, 2015). **The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' department of instruction and training** was in charge of construction. One of the outposts was named "**al-Yarmouk**" and was constructed near the Sajaiya neighborhood in the eastern part of Gaza City. Another post was named "Palestine" and was constructed on the ruins of Nisanit, a former Israeli village near the Erez crossing in the northern Gaza Strip, evacuated in 2005 (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, March 14, 2015).

Ismail Haniya visits one of the outposts on the forward line of the Gaza Strip, constructed by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The sacks forming a low wall came from the UN's World Food Programme, and were apparently donated by the agency to the Gaza Strip (Palinfo, April 4, 2016).

PIJ Observation Posts

40. **In July 2015 it was reported that operatives of the PIJ's military-terrorist wing had erected an observation post near the Israeli border**. It is located in **the region of the town of Ikhza'a in the southern Gaza Strip** and is eight meters (about 26 feet) tall. It is about 650 meters from the border security fence. From it PIJ operatives can monitor the movements of the IDF forces in the area (Jerusalem Brigades website, July 5, 2015). It can be assumed Hamas agreed to its construction.

Left: IDF forces moving along the border security fence seen from the observation post. Right: An observation post in the southern Gaza Strip (The PIJ's Paltoday, July 5, 2012).

Picture taken from the Jerusalem Brigades observation post east of Khan Yunes (Paltoday, June 5, 2015).

41. At the beginning of August 2015 the Jerusalem Brigades constructed a second observation post near the border security fence east of Gaza City. Organization operatives boasted it was to show their force to Israel. It is used for surveillance and to monitor IDF movements. It can also be used as a starting point for an attack in a future clash with Israel (Ma'an, August 5, 2016).

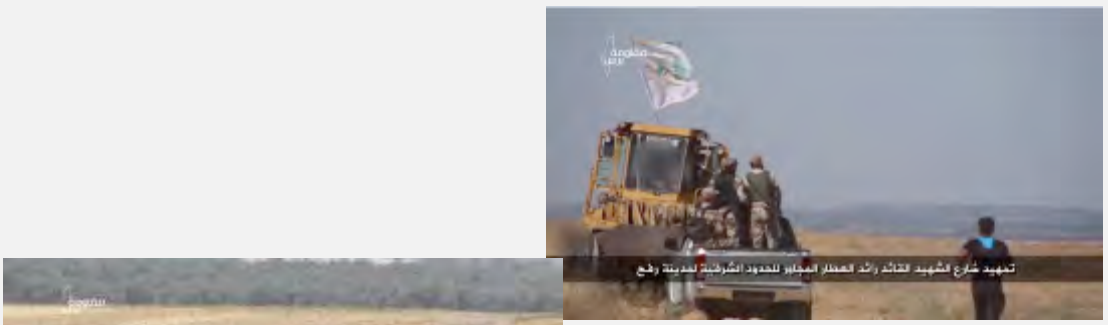
Observation post erected by the Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, near the fence east of Gaza City (Paltoday, August 5, 2015).

Paving a Road near Israel's Border Security Fence

42. At the end of May 2015 **senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad** announced that Hamas' military wing had begun paving a road parallel to the border with Israel (Sama, May 30, 2015). Hamas' media office in the western part of Gaza City said that the road would be named after Ahmed Jaabari (a senior Hamas terrorist operative

killed in a targeted attack by the IDF on November 14, 2012) (Alresala.net, June 3, 2015). The road runs along the eastern border of the Gaza Strip parallel to the border security fence at a distance of 250-300 meters (0.15-0.18 miles). The roadwork was secured by uniformed, armed operatives from the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades or Hamas security forces. The road was paved with debris from buildings destroyed in Operation Protective Edge.

43. Hamas spokesman gave various reasons for constructing the road, some of them for propaganda purposes. For example, **Fathi Hamad** claimed it was to create "suitable opportunities" to "attack the enemy" (Sama, May 30, 2015). On the other hand, a source in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades claimed **the road was constructed in response to internal security needs**, such as preventing Gazans from crossing the border into Israel. He also claimed the road would **protect "the tunnels of the resistance"** from Israel and its collaborators (Qudsnet, June 19, 2015). According to the Israeli media, senior IDF officers regard the road positively because it means Hamas has created a buffer zone near the border security fence (Haaretz, July 8, 2012).



Pictures from a video shown on Al-Aqsa TV of the paving of the road near the border security fence east of Rafah. Armed, uniformed operatives secure the roadwork a few meters from an IDF force (YouTube, June 4, 2015).

Smuggling Weapons and Ammunition into the Gaza Strip through the Crossings with Israel and by Sea

Overview

44. **Since Operation Protective Edge Hamas has been hard pressed to smuggle raw materials and weapons into the Gaza Strip**. In the wake of the many difficulties raised by the Egyptian security forces **Hamas has tried to find bypasses to smuggle them in through the crossings with Israel and by sea**.

Smuggling through the Crossings with Israel

45. In March 2015 a large system was exposed for smuggling goods into the Gaza Strip through the crossings with Israel. It was run by **Hamas** and dealt with acquiring and smuggling **iron and related products, electrical and electronic equipment, communications equipment and raw materials for industry** (whose entrance into the Gaza Strip requires special Israeli permission). The goods were smuggled into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing and **Hamas used them for its military buildup**.

46. Hamas used the thousands of tons of raw materials and equipment smuggled into the Gaza Strip to **construct military facilities, build tunnels and manufacture weapons**. In some instances smuggled materials were delivered directly to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' training camps and military-terrorist facilities. Israeli civilians

were also involved in the smuggling system, and they supplied, stored and delivered smuggled goods into the Gaza Strip. Some of the equipment was concealed in goods whose entry into the Gaza Strip was permitted. In one instance raw materials used in the manufacture of explosives were found in a truck bringing so-called "humanitarian assistance" (Israel Security Agency, March 2, 2016).

47. Some examples of Hamas' attempts to smuggle materials into the Gaza Strip were the following:

A. In **August 2016** Israeli security authorities at the Kerem Shalom crossing **found commando knives** in a shipment of plumbing equipment. The knives were hidden in crates of plumbing equipment. The transfer to Hamas of **graphite strips** originally consigned to the Palestinian electric company in the Gaza Strip was also prevented. **Graphite is a component of rocket fuel** (The crossings authority of the Israeli ministry of defense, August 10, 2016).

Commando knives intended to be smuggled into the Gaza Strip (The crossings authority of the Israeli ministry of defense, August 10, 2016).

B. In **July 2016** Israeli security authorities and the Israeli security forces exposed attempts to use the mail to smuggle contraband into the Gaza Strip via the Erez crossing, including **hang gliders and paragliders, binoculars, laser aiming devices, communications equipment, laser pointers, diving fins, various types of cameras and electronic components** whose import into the Gaza Strip is forbidden.

C. In **May 2016** inspectors at the **Erez crossing** foiled dozens of attempts to smuggle weapons and other military materials **in packages sent by mail**.

Hundreds of motors for drones, rifle scopes, gyroscope stabilizers, accuracy enhancers, range magnifiers and other appliances were found.

Drones, observation appliances, and communications equipment Hamas attempted to smuggle into the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing (Crossings authority of the Israeli ministry of defense, May 30, 2016).

D. 4) In **April 2016** customs inspectors at the Nitzana crossing, on collaboration with **the Israeli security forces, prevented four tons of ammonium chloride from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip** hidden by sacks of salt. According to the Israel Security Agency, the importer was a resident of the Gaza Strip affiliated with operatives from Hamas' military-terrorist wing. **Ammonium chloride is one of the materials used in the manufacture of long-range rockets**. Hundreds of rockets could have been manufactured from the amount seized (Website of the Israel Tax Authority, May 3, 2016).

The consignment of salt concealing the ammonium chloride (Website of the Israel Tax Authority, May 3, 2016).

E. In **August 2015** Israeli customs officials at the Nitzana border crossing, collaborating with the Israeli security forces, **prevented two tons of rolled fiberglass sheets from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip**. They were discovered in a shipment allegedly containing clothing. A **similar smuggling attempt was prevented the previous last week** at the Kerem Shalom crossing, when fiberglass was discovered in a shipment of school supplies imported for the beginning of the school year. **Fiberglass is a raw material used in the manufacture of long-range rockets and the shipments were meant to be delivered to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip** (Facebook page of Red Alert, August 17, 2015).

The Naval Smuggling Route

48. **Hamas also uses sea routes from the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip for smuggling** with the help of fishermen and smugglers. The Israeli navy prevented smuggling by sea on several occasions:

A. **At the end of January 2015** Israeli Navy forces halted a vessel en route from the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip. Liquid fiberglass resin was found on board, which is used in making rockets and mortar shells.

Using sea routes for smuggling: raw materials for the manufacture of rockets and mortar shells on their way to Hamas' military-terrorist wing were seized by the Israeli navy at the end of January, 2015 (IDF Spokesman, February 11, 2015).

B. In **April 2016** the Israeli security forces detained **Salim Gamal Hassan Na'man**. He was detained by the Israeli Navy after his fishing boat went beyond the offshore limit imposed on Gazan fishing. Interrogation revealed that **for a long time he had been involved in smuggling weapons and materials used in the manufacture of rockets** (such as liquid fiberglass). **The materials were intended for Hamas and other terrorist organizations**. Interrogation also revealed a large amount of information about Hamas' naval smuggling routes (Israel Security Agency, May 16, 2016).