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

The Palestinian Preventive Security thwarted an attempt to perpetrate a deadly terrorist attack at Karni Crossing. Such an attack could have resulted in the temporary closing of the crossing, regarded by Gaza Strip residents as a vital economic gateway. The terrorist attack was perpetrated by the Popular Resistance Committees, directed by senior Hamas operatives. Using the Popular Resistance Committees as a kind of sub-contractor allows Hamas to encourage terrorist attacks against Israel and its own enemies on the internal Palestinian scene without being directly associated with them.



The Israeli and Palestinian sides of the Karni Crossing (courtesy of Channel 10)

The aims of the terrorist attack

* On April 26, a terrorist group belonging to the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) attempted to perpetrate a shooting attack combined with the detonation of a car bomb at Karni Crossing. The terrorist attack was thwarted by the Palestinian security forces, notably the Palestinian Preventive Security.

* In our assessment, the terrorist attack was **aimed to kill Israelis** who operate the crossing, thus hindering its continued operation and **compromising one of the last symbols of daily Israeli-Palestinian coexistence and cooperation**. It would also have taken a heavy toll on Gaza Strip residents, who regard the crossing as a **vital economic gateway**, through which goods, foodstuffs, medications, and raw materials are transported into the Gaza Strip.

* In addition, in our view, the thwarted terrorist attack may be considered as **another expression of the escalating power struggles in the Palestinian Authority** between Abu Mazen, Fatah and the security forces, and Hamas. Karni Crossing is perceived as a source of power and income for the Preventive Security and Muhammad Dahlan, Hamas's hated enemy. The attack, had it been successful, could have compromised that source of power, even at the price of inflicting suffering upon the population.

*** The Hamas movement thus follows a two-faced policy: its government seeks solutions to the economic and social predicaments of the Gaza Strip residents and tries to raise urgent humanitarian assistance for them.¹ At the same time, Hamas's senior terrorist operatives initiated a terrorist attack that clearly goes against the interests of the population. The fact that the terrorist attack took place is testimony that the guiding interest is**

¹ Thus, for example, Bassem Naim, the Palestinian Minister of Health, called upon the Arab countries to extend urgent medical assistance to the Palestinian Authority since, as he claimed, there was a severe shortage of medical supplies and equipment in the government health institutions (Al-Hayat al-Jadida, May 1).

the desire to harm Israelis and damage the remains of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, as well as to weaken Hamas's opponents on the internal Palestinian scene, even at the price of inflicting suffering upon the Gaza Strip residents.

Description of the terrorist attack

* A terrorist group arrived at Karni Crossing in the afternoon in three vehicles. One vehicle was loaded with five barrels containing approximately 300 kg of explosives. The other two vehicles contained some 12 armed terrorists, who were supposed to perpetrate a shooting attack on the Israeli side of the crossing.

* The terrorists' intent was to penetrate into the sterile area of the crossing in order to detonate the wall separating the Palestinian and the Israeli sides. After the explosion, **the terrorists were to break into the Israeli side of the crossing in order to perpetrate a shooting attack, thus disrupting the activity taking place there.** It should be noted that a similar terrorist attack was perpetrated in January 2005 by the PRC, in cooperation with Hamas and Fatah (see Appendix).



**The five barrels of explosives found on the vehicle
(courtesy of Channel 10, April 26).**

* The terrorist attack at Karni Crossing was thwarted by **Palestinian security forces stationed there, mainly members of the Preventive Security.** The

Palestinian security forces noticed the vehicles, which aroused their suspicion. As the vehicles stopped for examination, fire was opened from one of them. Exchanges of fire then ensued, in the course of which the Palestinian security forces subdued some of the attackers (some, apparently, managed to escape). Some members of the security forces were injured during the exchanges of fire, including a National Security officer and a Preventive Security officer.



The detonation of the explosives found on one of the three vehicles that attempted to attack Karni Crossing (courtesy of Channel 10, April 26).

The significance of damaging the crossing

* **Karni Crossing is a vital economic gateway for the residents of Gaza Strip.** It is **daily crossed by some 400 trucks** containing goods, foodstuffs, medications, and raw materials, which are used by the population and are necessary for the economy of the Gaza Strip. Some three months ago, the crossing was closed down by Israel due to repeated warnings on terrorist organizations' intentions to perpetrate terrorist attacks there. About a month ago, the crossing was gradually reopened due to **humanitarian concerns**. Judging from past experience, if the attack had succeeded, it might have resulted in closing the crossing or serious disruptions in its operation, at least for several months.

Karni Crossing and other crossings as preferred targets for terrorist attacks

* During the course of the current violent confrontation, **Karni and Erez crossings, despite their high significance for the Gaza Strip residents, have served as preferred targets for the activity of Hamas, Fatah, and the PRC (see Appendix for previous attempts to perpetrate terrorist attacks at Karni Crossing).**

* **The present terrorist attack demonstrates that even in the age of Hamas's government, Karni Crossing is still a preferred target for the terrorist organizations, including the PRC (at the forefront) and Hamas (backstage).**

Responses to the thwarted terrorist attack

* **No terrorist organization has claimed responsibility** for the thwarted terrorist attack. Government spokesman Ghazi Hamad denied the Israeli reports stating that the Hamas movement was behind the attempt to perpetrate the terrorist attack at Karni Crossing (Sama News Agency, May 1).

* After the attack was thwarted, **Salim Abu Safiyeh**, Abu Mazen's subordinate and chief of the Palestinian Border Authority, announced that security measures were tightened at all border crossings between the Gaza Strip, Israel and Egypt, in order to prevent further attempts to perpetrate terrorist attacks that would result in closing the crossings. He added that closing the crossings could have **“devastating effects”** due to the ensuing shortage of basic foodstuffs and medications (AFP, April 30).

The perpetrators of the terrorist attack: a PRC group operated by Hamas

* An investigation of the terrorist attack by the Israel Security Agency shows that it was perpetrated by the **PRC**. The perpetrators belong to a group headed by **Mumtaz Muhammad Jum'ah Daghmash**, a senior PRC operative who was involved in many terrorist attacks perpetrated by the organization. **Since early 2005**, Mumtaz Daghmash and his group have been **handled by Hamas**, which provided them with extensive operative assistance, including funding, training, and supply of arms and ammunition.² The cooperation between the two sides includes occasional meetings of Mumtaz Daghmash and his group with Hamas leaders, who green-light the group's operative activity.

* It should be noted that other than terrorist missions against Israel, **Daghmash and his group are also used as Hamas's operative wing against the movement's opponents on the interior Palestinian scene, mainly against members of the security and government apparatuses.** An example is the murder of Moussa Arafat, who had served as the commander of Military Intelligence in the Gaza Strip and, after his retirement, as Abu Mazen's special advisor. The murder took place on September 7, 2005, by terrorists belonging to the PRC, under the leadership of Daghmash. The terrorists who murdered Moussa Arafat **received operative assistance from senior Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip, who, apparently, also instructed them to perpetrate the murder.**

* The investigation of the terrorist attack shows that the thwarted attack is the culmination of the attempts to perpetrate a terrorist attack at Karni Crossing in the last three months. In these attempts, **senior Hamas operatives were**

² For further details on the assistance extended by Hamas to the Popular Resistance Committees, see Information Bulletin "[Strong indications that the Popular Resistance Committees have become a kind of subcontractor for Hamas...](#)" (April 28, 2006).

identified as being constantly involved in the terrorist activity of Daghmash and his group, including direction, counseling, training, and providing arms and ammunition. The persons involved included the following Hamas operatives:

✓ **Ahmed Naji Ahmed Ghandour**—chief of Hamas in the northern Gaza Strip. Authorizes terrorist attacks for PRC members. He and his men hold close, constant contact with Daghmash and his operatives, and direct their activities.

✓ **Ahmed Sa'id Khalil Jaabari**—one of the leaders of Hamas's operative wing in the Gaza Strip. Frequently meets with Daghmash and his men, for whom he serves as a source of funding and authorizes their terrorist-operative activity.

✓ **Imad al-Din Muhammad Abd al-Hadi**—a senior Hamas operative specializing in explosive materials. Often assists PRC members in training terrorists and preparing arms and ammunition.

✓ **Abd al-Mu'ti Muhammad Abd al-Majid Abu Def**—a senior trainer in explosives for Hamas who assisted in preparing and training the terrorists from the group that attacked Karni Crossing. He was killed in a training accident in February 2006, while delivering military training.

Karni Crossing—aerial photograph³



³ Source: a January 2004 Information Bulletin: “The suicide bombing attack at the Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip: another example of the Palestinian terrorist organizations’ attempts to perpetrate suicide bombing attacks at civilian sites vital to the welfare of the entire Palestinian population. That was done to sabotage successful manifestations of Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation and political coexistence.”

Appendix

Prominent terrorist attacks perpetrated or thwarted at Karni Crossing

* Since September 2000, dozens of terrorist attacks have been perpetrated at Karni Crossing. Furthermore, there have been exposed many attempts to smuggle arms, ammunition and terrorists through the crossing.

* Following are some prominent examples of terrorist attacks perpetrated or thwarted at Karni Crossing during the course of the current violent confrontation:

✓ **April 26, 2006.** A **PRC** group attempted to perpetrate a deadly terrorist attack at the crossing, combining a shooting attack with the detonation of a car bomb. The terrorist attack, directed by **Hamas**, was thwarted by the Palestinian security forces, mainly the Preventive Security.

✓ **December 14, 2005.** A car laden with explosives, with 4 terrorists inside, drove towards Karni Crossing in order to perpetrate a deadly terrorist attack. IDF forces noticed the suspect vehicle and opened fire. The vehicle exploded. The terrorists belonged to **Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the PRC.**

✓ **January 13, 2005.** Three terrorists parked a truck containing explosive materials near the wall separating the Israeli and Palestinian sides of the crossing (as was intended in April 2006). The charges exploded, ripping a hole in the wall that was used by the terrorists to infiltrate into Israeli territory. Six Karni Crossing employees were killed and five were injured. Two Israeli security guards returned fire, killing the

terrorists. The terrorist attack was perpetrated by the **PRC, in collaboration with Hamas and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.**

✓ **December 7, 2004.** An explosive charge detonated near an IDF force in the vicinity of Karni Crossing. One IDF soldier was killed and 4 were injured.

✓ **March 14, 2004.** A double suicide bombing was perpetrated in the Ashdod Port. The terrorists responsible passed through Karni Crossing and hid inside a double partition installed on a container making its way from the Gaza Strip to Israeli territory. In the terrorist attack in the Ashdod Port, ten civilians were killed and 12 were injured. The terrorist attack was perpetrated by two suicide bombers from **Hamas and Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.**

✓ **April 15, 2003.** A terrorist who infiltrated into Karni Crossing perpetrated a shooting attack and threw grenades. As a result, two civilians were killed and three were injured.