



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

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The detention and rush release of terrorists: the revolving door policy under Arafat

1. It was recently revealed that the Palestinian Authority released three terrorist operatives who planned to assassinate Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert during a visit to Jericho in late June 2007 (which in the end was cancelled). The three, members of the Palestinian security services and Fatah-Tanzim, were released after a few months' detention despite the fact that during interrogation it was discovered that they planned to shoot at the prime minister's convoy. Two of the three were recently detained again by the Palestinian security services after Israel lodged protests.¹

2. Israel protested to the PA and the United States through a variety of channels that the rush release of the terrorists was a return to the revolving door policy used at the height of the Palestinian terrorist campaign (the second intifada) under Yasser Arafat. At that time the Palestinian security services customarily detained terrorist operatives to give Israel and the United States the false impression that genuine

¹ For further information see our October 23 Bulletin entitled "The Palestinian Authority released (and again detained) terrorists who planned to assassinate the Israeli Prime Minister on his way to a meeting in Jericho (in late June, 2007)," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_221007e.htm.

measures were being taken to prevent terrorism. A substantial number the detainees were released after a short period once a superficial interrogation had been conducted and without their preparations for terrorist attacks having been foiled.

3. A clear example of the revolving door policy can be found in a document seized during Operation Defensive Shield (2002) and analyzed in the September 2002 Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center Information Bulletin entitled “**The Release of 27 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad Detainees.**” The Bulletin deals with the release of terrorist operatives who were detained by the PA, including those who were involved in suicide bombing attacks, the manufacture of explosive devices and rockets, and the laying of charges. An examination of the names of the operatives released showed that at least some of them returned to terrorist activities and were involved in the planning, direction and carrying out of mass-casualty terrorist attacks which peaked in 2002 and resulted directly in Operation Defensive Shield.²

² For another example of the revolving door policy see our February 11, 2004 Hebrew Bulletin entitled [“Bethlehem as a focal point for terrorist attacks.”](#) It shows how the Palestinian security services in the Bethlehem region customarily released terrorist operatives after a superficial treatment even when their involvement in terrorist attacks had been clearly revealed. Some of the detainees even belonged to the Palestinian security services as well as to terrorist organizations.