



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

February 10, 2008

**Renewed escalation of Hamas rocket fire at
western Negev towns and villages
(Summary of events, February 5-7)¹**



Evacuating the wounded in Sderot (Alex Zeger, Sderot Media Center, February 5).



Fragments of a Qassam rocket which fell near the playground at Kibbutz Beerli, wounding a two-year old baby and a 12-year old girl (Alex Zeger, Sderot Media Center, February 6).

Overview

1. Two weeks after the last escalation in the fighting between Hamas and Israel,² a new one began. Hamas carried out a suicide bombing attack in Dimona using a squad of terrorist operatives from Hebron and stepped up the rocket fire at Ashqelon, Sderot and the western Negev towns and villages (so

¹ As of 12 noon, February 7. The rocket attack continued after this Bulletin was written, and is still going on.

² The first escalation occurred between January 15 and 18, 2008, during which **Hamas fired more than 150 rockets into Israeli territory**. The level of rocket fire then returned to the “routine” of a few daily hits.

far almost 40 rockets have been fired). The IDF carried out intensive counterterrorist activities with attacks on launch squads and Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip.

The Hamas Rocket Attack (Click to view)

2. Between February 5 and 7 **rocket fire** targeting western Negev towns and villages **escalated**, led by Hamas. The number of rockets fired at Sderot increased and several were also launched at Ashqelon:

1) **February 5**: A volley of rockets was launched at Sderot in the morning, two of them hitting factories in the industrial zone. Several residents were treated for shock. Later, two additional volleys were fired which seriously wounded three Israeli civilians, one of them a **14-year old girl**. In addition, 3 rockets were fired at Ashqelon and others landed in open fields near western Negev towns and villages. **Eighteen rockets** were launched on February 5, most of them identified on Israeli territory.



Direct hit on a home in Sderot which wounded a 14-year old girl (Alex Zeger, Sderot Media Center, February 5).

2) **February 6**: A number of rockets were fired at Sderot, two of them hitting the city, one a direct hit on a residential home. Rockets were also launched at western Negev towns and villages bordering the northern and southern Gaza Strip. **One of them hit a playground at Kibbutz Beer** and wounded a two-year old and a 12-year old girl. A total of **nine rockets** were fired into Israeli territory.



Direct hit on a home in Sderot (Alex Zeger, Sderot Media Center, February 6).



Rocket hit near the playground at Kibbutz Beeri (Alex Zeger, Sderot Media Center, February 6).

3) **February 7** (as of 12 noon): During the morning hours nine rockets were fired at Sderot and the western Negev towns and villages. Damage to property was done and a number of residents were treated for shock. Two more rockets were fired, one hitting **close to a school** to the south of the Gaza Strip.

3. Responsibility for most of the rocket fire was claimed by Hamas (as it was during the previous escalation). Responsibility for some was claimed by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Hamas also claimed responsibility for the mortar shells fired at IDF forces and villages close to the Gaza Strip border. During the current escalation **36 rockets** have been fired, most of them identified in Israeli territory, and **15 mortar shells**.

Israeli Security Forces' Counterterrorist Activities

4. Following the suicide bombing attack in Dimona and the rocket attack on the western Negev towns and villages, the Israeli security forces have carried out intensive counterterrorist activities in the Gaza Strip to prevent rocket launches and to hit Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip:

1) **February 5**: Israeli Air Force helicopters struck a building belonging to Hamas's Executive Force (police) in Khan Yunis after a morning rocket attack targeting Sderot (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 5). **The strike killed seven of Hamas's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades terrorist operatives** (Al-Qassam Website, February 5). Later in the day Palestinian terrorists shot at civilian workers near the security fence in the southern Gaza strip and the IDF returned fire. In the evening the IDF attacked armed terrorists near the security fence north of the Karni Crossing.

2) **February 6:** In the evening the IAF attacked an arms storehouse and a weapons manufacturing plant. Both structures were destroyed. IDF ground forces supported the IAF in attacking terrorist squads in the rocket-launching areas of the northern Gaza Strip. The IDF struck armed terrorist operatives from the air and on the ground (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 6).

3) **February 7:** In the morning the IDF attacked a number of armed terrorists in the northern Gaza Strip, killing six: five Hamas terrorists and one from the PIJ. The IAF attacked a rocket-launching squad **operating close to the agricultural school in Beit Hanoun, a location the squads use to launch rockets, despite its proximity to a school.**³ According to Palestinian reports a teacher was killed and a number of students were injured (Ynet, February 7).

Hamas Threatens More Suicide Bombing Attacks

5. Following the attack in Dimona and escalating the attacks from the Gaza Strip, Hamas initiated a campaign glorifying the suicide bombing and **threatening Israel that there would be more.** **Osama Abd al-Mu'ti**, Hamas's representative in Tehran, said the following (Filastin al-'An Website, February 6):



Dr. Osama Abd al-Mu'ti (Al-Alam TV, March 26, 2006).

1) The suicide bombing in Dimona proved that Hamas had never relinquished such attacks. It was carried out after a year without suicide bombing attacks⁴ during which the enemy continued its "aggression" against the Palestinian people.

2) By the attack in Dimona the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades sent the message that the suicide bombing attacks **were being renewed** and that "the enemy could expect more." Hamas, he said, would make Israel pay a price

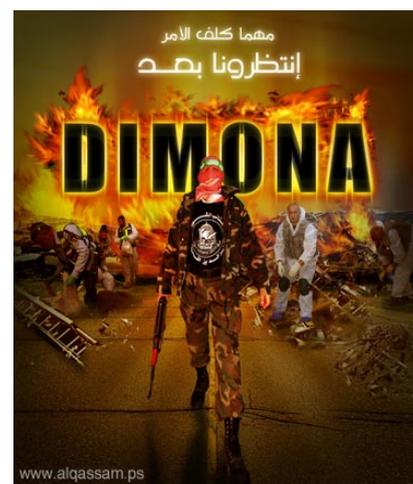
³ The schoolyard has often been used as a rocket-launching site. For further information see our November 4, 2007 Bulletin entitled "A terrorist squad fired a mortar shell from within an educational complex in the town of Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/edu_institutions_e.htm and http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/edu_institutions_e.pdf.

⁴ The last suicide bombing attack carried out by Hamas was at the central bus station in Beersheba on August 12, 2005.

not only by launching rockets but through suicide bombing attacks, which in the past had led to the death and wounding of hundreds of Israelis.

3) Hamas clung to the option of the “resistance” [terrorism] and “the fate of all negotiations and absurd agreements [would be] only failure and destruction.”

6. Senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip **Osama al-Muzeini** said that if it seemed as though there were fewer suicide bombing attacks, Dimona proved that it was an illusion. Asked whether there would be more suicide bombing attacks, he answered that “everything is possible, all possibilities are open” (Filastin al-An Website, February 6). On February 6 the **Palestine-info Website** posted an announcement to the effect that “the path of resistance and jihad, including suicide bombing attacks, is the only way to liberate Palestine.” Senior Hamas official **Yahya Musa** said that more attacks would follow the one in Dimona and that a new terrorist campaign [intifada] would break out (Al-Aqsa TV, February 6).



“Regardless of the cost, wait for us after Dimona” (Al-Qassam Website, February 7).



Yahya Musa, senior Hamas official threatened that the suicide bombing attack launched by a squad from Hebron would not be the only one. More, he said, would come and heralded a brilliant future for the resistance and the new beginning of an armed intifada (Al-Aqsa TV, February 6).