



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

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**Senior Hamas operative figure tells London Sunday Times' Gaza Strip correspondent about Iranian and Syria military aid, detailing the training received by hundreds of Hamas terrorist operatives and describing the transmission to Hamas of Iranian technical know-how for the manufacture of rockets and IEDs.**

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## **Overview**

1. On March 9, 2008, the London **Sunday Times** published an interview held in Gaza City by correspondent **Marie Colvin**, who met with a senior operative belonging to the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's terrorist operative wing. He was accompanied by an operative from Hamas's weapons manufacturing wing, whose job is putting together explosive mixtures for use in Qassam rockets. The senior operative was speaking on the record but preferred to remain anonymous (although his physical description appears in the article).
2. The senior operative detailed **the training Hamas terrorist operatives received in Iran and Syria**, setting a precedent in that Hamas consistently avoids admitting in public that its operatives

are trained there. That is because it does not want to embarrass either country, both of which claim that their support of the terrorist organizations is political, propagandist and moral.<sup>1</sup>

3. In our assessment, the Sunday Times article is **authentic** and reflects the support and aid Iran and Syria give Hamas in **training its operatives**. Hamas's terrorist operative wing today has a core of **several hundred well-trained operatives** who underwent advanced training in Iran and Syria in a variety of military fields described in the article. Iranian support is also manifested, as noted by the Hamas operatives who were interviewed, by the transmission of technological know-how to Hamas, used in the manufacture of weapons, including IEDs and rockets.

4. According to the article, the Iranian regime placed **its Iranian Revolutionary Guards** in charge of providing military support for terrorist organizations and terrorist operatives in the Middle East and around the world. The Revolutionary Guards' **Quds Force** serves as the primary conduit for transmitting aid to the various terrorist organizations; its activities focus on the Palestinian, Lebanon (support for Hezbollah) and Iraqi arenas.<sup>2</sup>



The insignia of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards

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<sup>1</sup> It was not a matter of chance that the Hamas representative in Tehran, Abu Osama Abd al-Mu'ati, was quick to repudiate the Sunday Times article and claim that it had been published to "put pressure on Hamas and Iran and to intensify the sanctions on them (Fars News Agency, March 9, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> For further information see our April 2, 2007 Bulletin entitled "Using the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards as the main tool to export the revolution beyond the borders of Iran" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/iran\\_e0307.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_e0307.htm).

5. **Iran aids and supports Hamas** in the following ways: by **transferring enormous sums of money** to the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip and to the Hamas movement; by **training Hamas operatives** in military skills in Iran; by **smuggling arms** into the Gaza Strip, including the 122mm Grad missiles which recently attacked Ashqelon; by **transmitting technical-operational know-how** used to manufacture and improve the weapons in Hamas's possession, including increasing the destructive power of the IEDs and homemade rockets used to attack Israel. **All that is done to improve Hamas's ability to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel, to reinforce the military infrastructure Hamas constructed in the Gaza Strip and to improve its chances of surviving a future confrontation with Israel.**

## **The Main Points Made by the Senior Hamas Operative in the Sunday Times Interview**

6. **The following are the main points made by the senior Hamas operative in the Sunday Times interview about the training of Hamas operatives in Iran:**

1) **Hundreds of Hamas terrorist operatives have trained and are training in Iran:** the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been training them in Tehran for more than two years, ever since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in August 2005 (i.e., since the disengagement). So far 150 have finished their training. **An additional 150 are currently there**, improving their fighting skills. Some of them will return as fighters and others, who are not fit to fight, will join Hamas's "research unit."

2) **The route to Iran:** Hamas operatives leave the Gaza Strip and enter Egypt, from there they fly to Syria and from there to Tehran. Entering and leaving Tehran they are permitted not to have [their passports] stamped for security reasons.<sup>3</sup>

3) **Length and location of training:** Hamas operatives train for periods lasting **between 45 days and six months**. The training takes place at a closed military base under difficult conditions and is supervised by Revolutionary Guards. The operatives are allowed off base only once a week, and even then only in a group and accompanied by Iranian security personnel.

4) **Training:** Hamas operatives undergo training in **tactical warfare and weapons operation** and return to the Gaza Strip with the skills they acquired in advanced technology,

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<sup>3</sup> That was also the case in the past with Hezbollah operatives who left for training in Iran. For example, **Hussein Ali Suleiman**, a Hezbollah terrorist operative captured in the second Lebanon war, said that he had trained in Iran with a group of 40-50 Hezbollah operatives from Lebanon. He said that the men in his group avoided having their passports stamped in Syria and Iran to hide the fact that they had gone to Iran for training.

rocket launching, detonating IEDs, sniping and other military tactics, **similar to those used by Hezbollah**.

5) **So far seven groups of Hamas operatives have been sent to Iran**. The best students in each group remain in Iran for longer periods, participate in advanced courses and return to the Gaza Strip to serve as **instructors**.

6) **Training in Syria**: Hamas operatives from the Gaza Strip are also sent to **Syria** for basic training. So far **600 Hamas terrorist operatives** have been trained in Syria by instructors who learned their techniques in Iran. **There are currently 60 terrorist operatives training in Syria**.

7) **Hezbollah as inspiration for Hamas**: Hamas's terrorist operative wing, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, has **15,000 fighters**, and regards **Hezbollah as a role model** and the experience it gathered in Lebanon fighting against Israel as a **source of inspiration**.

7. Both terrorist operatives interviewed mentioned the subject of the **technological know-how** Iran provides Hamas with. Hamas considers it **very important** in view of Hezbollah's success in fighting Israel in 2006 (the second Lebanon war). Iranian technology has taught Hamas how to manufacture IEDs and rockets from simple materials found in the Gaza Strip. The senior operator noted that with Iranian technology Hamas developed the **Shawaz 4, a new generation IED**. The operative from the Hamas manufacturing wing who accompanied the senior operator to the interview said that "Anything they think will be useful, our guys there e-mail it to us right away."



Homemade Hamas IEDs nicknamed **Shawaz** ("burning flame"), first exposed by the IDF on September 12, 2006, near the Gaza Strip's main road. They are more powerful than the IEDs usually employed by the Palestinian terrorist organizations and can penetrate 200mm (8") of steel. The upgraded quality is the result of more energetic explosives and the use of technological know-how imported from Iran. Hamas improved the basic model and developed advanced models, including the Shawaz 4 mentioned in the interview.

## The Use Recently Made of Iranian Weapons by the Terrorist Organizations in the Gaza Strip

8. Iranian support and aid for Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations, as described in the interview, enable them to improve their operational capabilities by **arming themselves with factory-manufactured weapons** (smuggled into the Gaza Strip) and by **improving their own homemade weapons**. A manifestation of that was the use recently made in the Gaza Strip of rockets and mortar shells **manufactured in Iran**.

1) **The 122mm Grad rockets fired at Ashqelon in January and at the end of February<sup>4</sup> were manufactured in Iran**. An examination of rocket fragments found on the ground showed that they were Grad rockets whose motor was composed of four parts. Rockets with that type of motor are different from those fired in the past and **were manufactured in Iran**.<sup>5</sup> They were smuggled into the Gaza Strip for Hamas by **Syria and Iran** when the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Egypt was breached. (Different model 122mm Grad rockets manufactured in Russia and China were supplied to Hezbollah in Lebanon by Iran and Syria. Most of the rockets launched by Hezbollah at population centers in Israel during the second Lebanon war were various types of 122mm Grad rockets.)



**Upright in the center of the picture, a Grad rocket fired on December 28, 2007, in front of a police storehouse in Sderot; on the shelves are the remains of Qassam rockets which fell in and around the city.**

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<sup>4</sup> During the last round of escalation (February 28 to March 3, 2008) there were 22 identified hits of Grad rockets in Ashqelon. Before then only occasional Grad rockets had been fired.

<sup>5</sup> Grad rockets are also manufactured in Russian, China and Bulgaria.

2) **Standard, Iranian-manufactured 120mm mortar shells fired at villages and IDF posts along the Gaza Strip border:**

i) On February 24 the terrorist organizations **fired standard, factory-manufactured 120mm mortar shells** from the Gaza Strip which landed **near Kibbutz Sa'ad**. An examination of the fragments showed that they were apparently manufactured in Iran (a copy of the mortar shells manufactured by the Israeli military industry in the 1970s). **The shell is equipped with an auxiliary rocket motor which increases its range from six to ten kilometers** (almost 4 to more than 6 miles).



**120mm Iranian mortar shell with auxiliary motor**

ii) On February 29 a mortar shell fell near the **IDF's Sufa post** in the southern Gaza strip. An examination of the fragments showed that it was a **standard-manufacture 120mm shell made in Iran** in 2006. Its warhead was **much more destructive** than that of an improvised rocket of the same weight.



**120mm Iranian mortar shell**



Fragments of a mortar shell fired from the Gaza Strip; Part of the tail of a mortar fired from the Gaza Strip; Tail of a 120mm mortar from the second Lebanon war