



**Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center  
Israel Intelligence Heritage and  
Commemoration Center**

## **News of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict**

**March 25-April 1, 2008**



**The IDF removes the Rimonim roadblock east of Ramallah as part of the “package” of eased restrictions presented by Defense Minister Ehud Barak (Reuters, March 31).**

### **Overview**

- Events this week focused on the “package” of eased restrictions presented by Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak to American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad . The package included various security and civilian issues, including removing roadblocks to enable free car travel for Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. It is intended to make daily life easier for the Palestinian population and to improve economic conditions, even at the expense of security risks for Israel.
- On the ground Qassam rocket fire from the Gaza Strip was “routine” with the exception of a barrage of 22 rockets fired on March 26, for which the Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed most of the responsibility.

## Important Events

### Exceptional Barrage of Rocket Fire

■ During the past week rocket fire from the Gaza Strip was “routine,” with the **exception of a barrage of 22 rockets** fired on March 26. Most of the responsibility was claimed by the **PIJ**. A total of 32 rockets were fired during the week, compared with 12 the previous week. In addition, 26 mortar shells were fired, compared with 17 the previous week.



The Popular Resistance Committees fire Nasser 3 rockets on March 26, (Al-Aqsa TV, March 27).

### Stabbing Foiled near the Settlement of Shiloh

■ On March 31 a Palestinian terrorist tried to stab two Israeli civilians who were waiting for a ride between the settlements of Eli and Shiloh in the West Bank. The terrorist, a Bir Zeit University student, had two knives. According to eye-witness reports, he approached the two and spoke to them in broken English, keeping his hands in his pockets. When they refused to answer he took out a knife and tried to stab them. One of them, who was armed, shot and killed him (Ynet, March 31).

■ The Palestinian Wafa News Agency reported that Abd al-Latif Ali Muhammad Kharoub, 22, a resident of the village of Khares, was killed because he happened to be there at the time (Wafa News Agency, March 31). On the other hand, a group calling itself the Struggle and Return Battalions of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attempted abduction of one Israeli soldier and the stabbing of another near Shiloh (Qudsnet Website, Ma'an News Agency, March 31).

## Counterterrorist Activities

### The Gaza Strip

■ During the past week counterterrorist activities continued along the security fence with pinpoint activities within the Gaza Strip near the fence. On March 29 the Israeli Air Force attacked a squad of terrorists moving near the fence (IDF Spokesman's Website, March 29). On March 28, a Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operative was killed in an exchange of fire with IDF forces operating near the fence in the northern Gaza Strip (PalMedia Website, March 29).

### Hamas Terrorist Operative Detained in the Gaza Strip

■ It can now be reported that in a combined IDF-Israel Security Agency action on February 25, an IDF force detained Muhammad Qassem, a Hamas operative, resident of Beit Lahia. During interrogation he admitted his involvement in a series of attacks and attempted attacks, including using IEDs against IDF forces and carrying out ambushes and observations. He participated in planning a suicide bombing attack. He was also an accomplice in planning an attack against IDF forces while pretending to participate in a demonstration organized by Hamas near the Erez Crossing to protest the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman, April 1).

■ In September 2007 Muhammad Qassem was recruited by the Hamas suicide bombing unit and participated in a training course with 40 other Hamas terrorist operatives. Having joined the unit, he was supposed to be given a 20 kilogram (44 lb) explosive belt to carry out a suicide bombing attack.

### Head of Hamas's Operational Network in Tulkarm Detained

■ On the night of March 25 in the village of Bila'a near Tulkarm the Israeli security forces detained **Omar Jaber**, head of the Hamas network in Tulkarm. He had been on the wanted list since 2002, when he was directly involved in the suicide bombing attack at the Park Hotel in Netanya on the night of the Passover Seder. The attack killed 30 Israeli civilians and wounded 143.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further information see our May 1, 2004 Bulletin entitled "Passover Eve Massacre at Park Hotel in Netanya" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/html/final/eng/sib/6\\_04/park\\_h.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/html/final/eng/sib/6_04/park_h.htm).

■ Omar Jaber was responsible for finding an escort for the suicide bomber and having him contact Abbas Sayyid, head of the Hamas network in the Tulkarm region. During interrogation Abbas Sayyid admitted that he had known Jaber since 1994, when they had been in prison together. In recent years Jaber had been responsible for recruiting terrorist operatives to the Hamas ranks and during the past year had been directly involved in their military training.

■ During the past few years, while he had been in hiding in the villages in the Tulkarm district, his family helped him transmit coded messages to Hamas terrorist operatives. Some of the messages were requests for money to continue his own activities and those of operatives connected to him and to purchase and hide weapons. In January 2007 he began to set up a branch of Hamas's Executive Force in the Tulkarm district and was responsible for financing it, purchasing weapons and recruiting operatives. At the same time he was active in setting up squads to reinforce Hamas's operational capabilities in the area (IDF Spokesman's Website, March 26).

### A Senior Popular Front Operative Detained in Nablus

■ In a combined IDF-ISA action on January 15, Ibrahim Sayyid Ibrahim Salem was detained. Salem, a senior PFLP figure in Nablus, was born in the Ein Beit Ilma refugee camp in 1985.

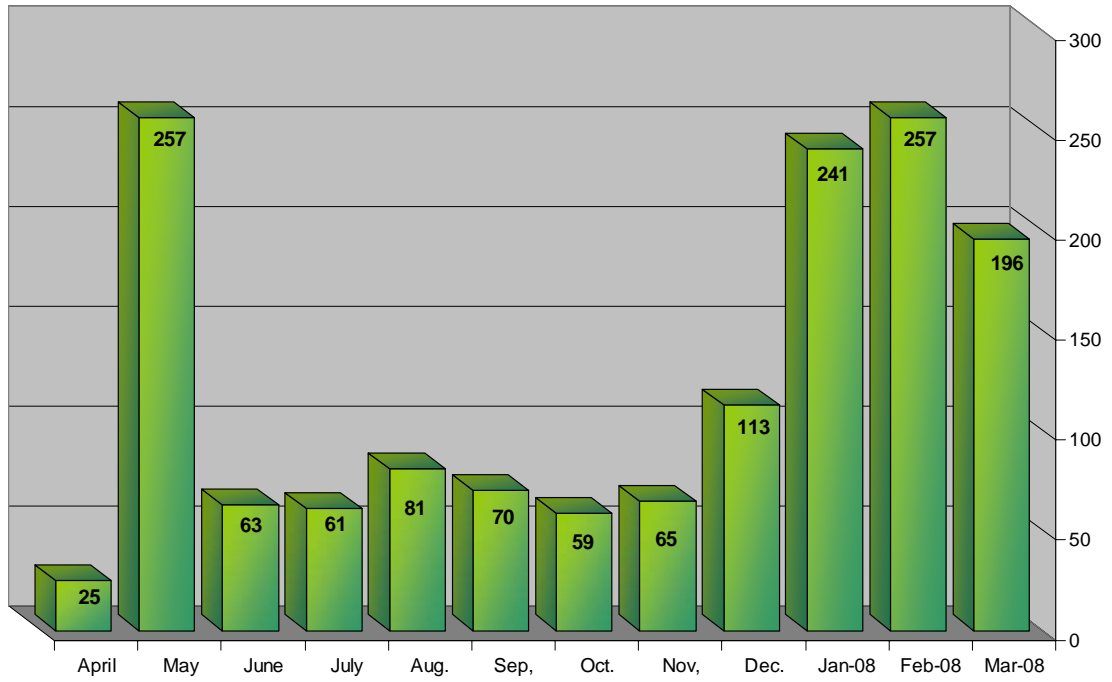
■ During interrogation he admitted to having been involved in an attack on IDF forces on September 18, 2007, in the Ein Beit Imaa refugee camp during which **Sergeant Ben-Tzion Henman was killed**. He was also involved in an attempted suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv which was prevented by the Israeli security forces on September 22, 2007.<sup>2</sup> He admitted to being involved with other terrorist operatives in the PFLP in the serial manufacture of explosives and in preparing a car bomb in Nablus.

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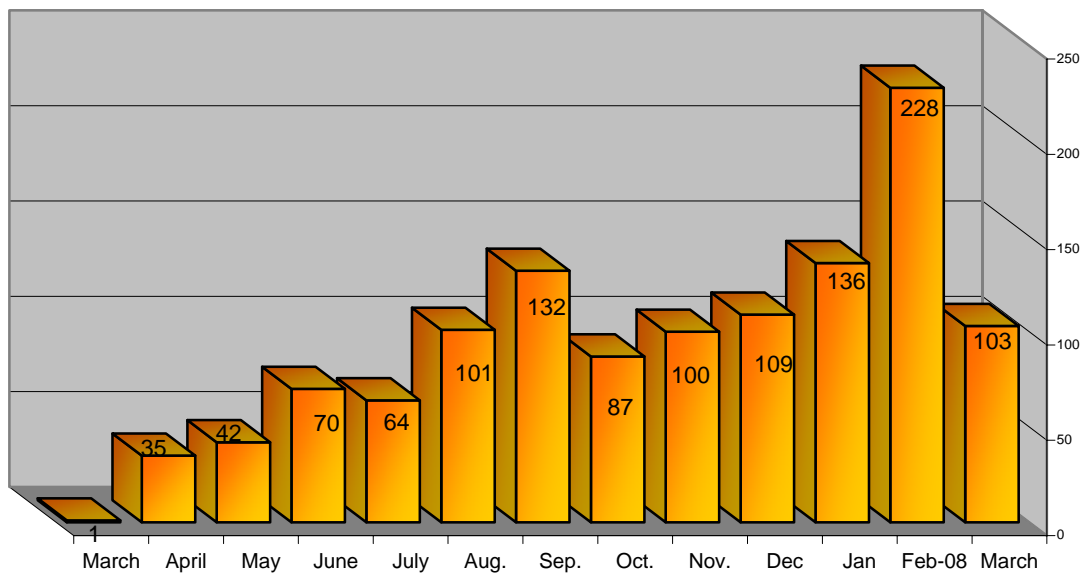
<sup>2</sup> For further information see our September 23, 2007 Bulletin entitled "A suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv was prevented by the detention of a Hamas operative which led to the discovery of an explosive belt hidden in the southern part of the city. Its existence was revealed by an intensive security forces operation in Nablus" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/ct\\_230907e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_230907e.htm).

## Statistical Data

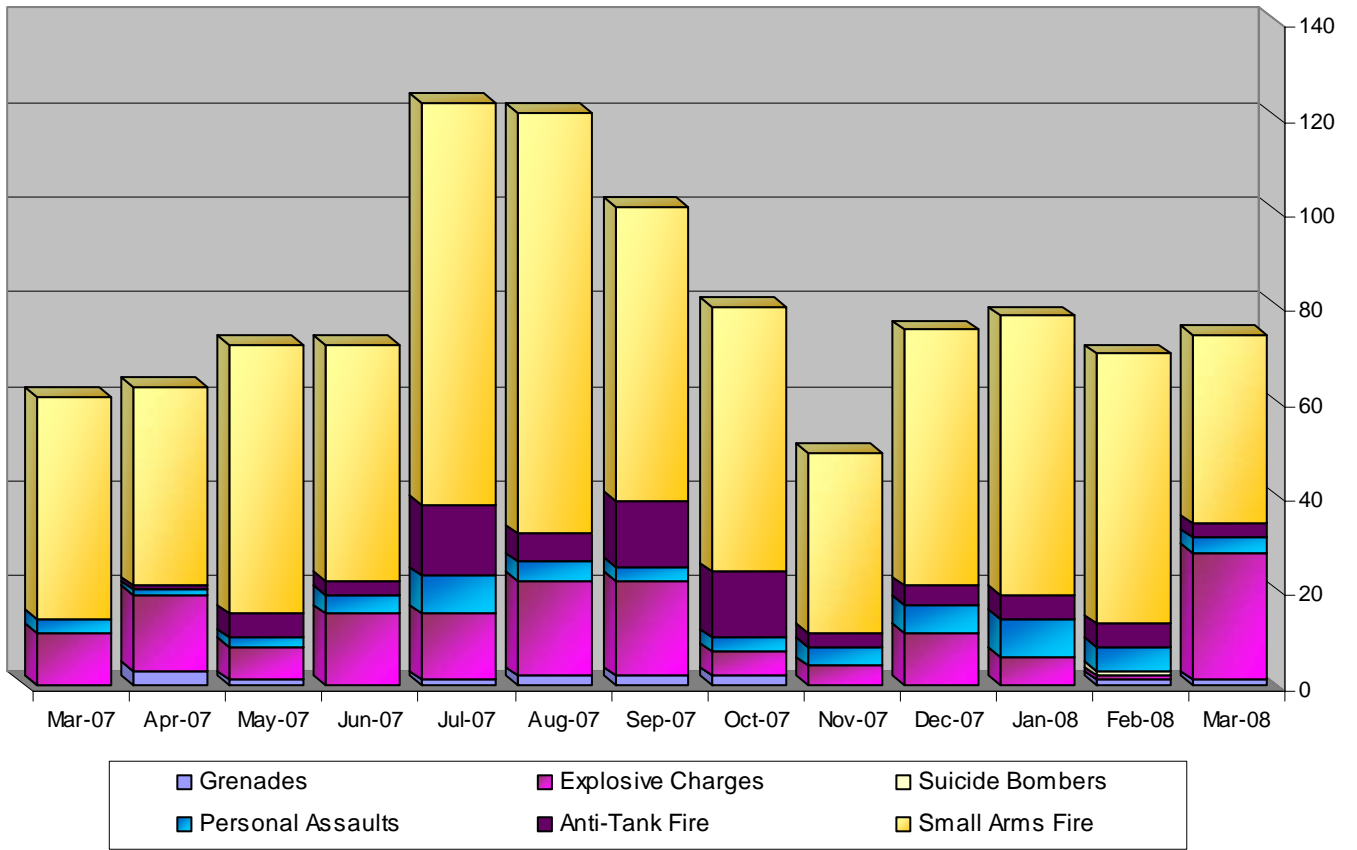
### Monthly Distribution of Rocket Hits



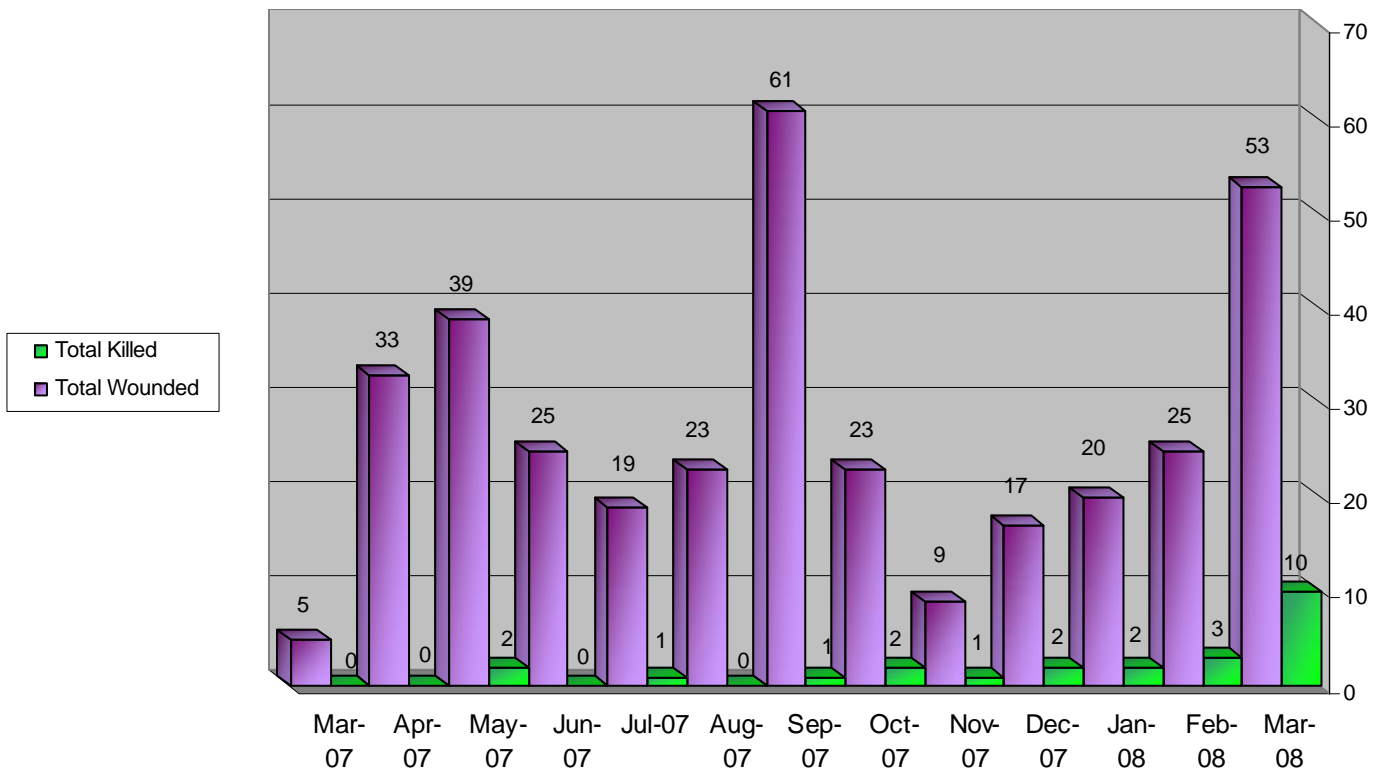
### Monthly Distribution of Mortar Shell Hits



### Monthly Distribution of Attacks



### Monthly Distribution of Israeli Casualties



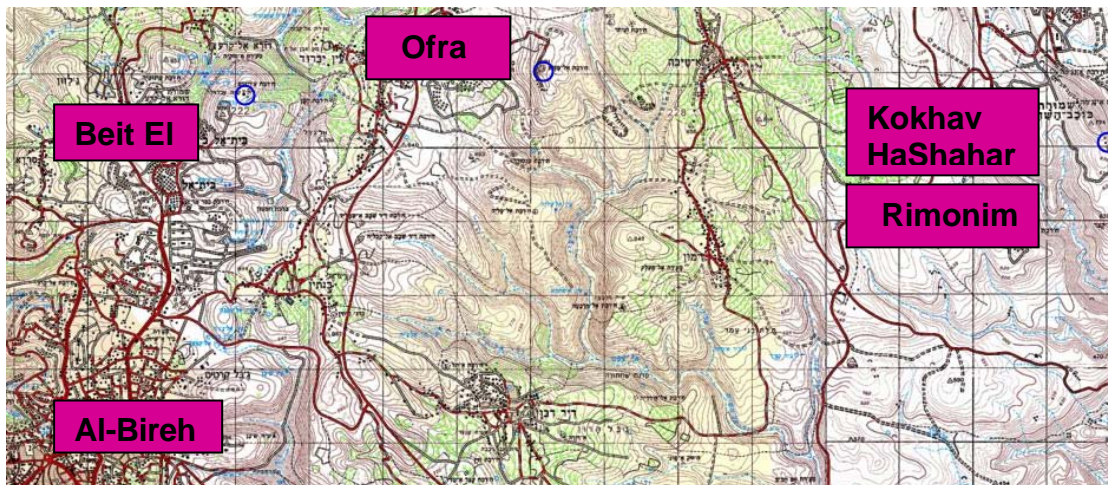


## The Annapolis Process

■ On March 30 Defense Minister Ehud Barak met with the American Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. The Defense Minister proposed a “package” of **eased restrictions** for the Palestinians which he had authorized:

### ■ Security

- **Removal of roadblocks:** A permanent roadblock in the **Rimonim** region, east of Ramallah, would be removed,<sup>3</sup> as would 50 dirt road barriers. The possibility of removing additional roadblocks and checkpoints in Judea and Samaria would be examined and carried out by mid-May. The removal of the roadblocks would facilitate the passage of Palestinian vehicles between Jenin, Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Ramallah. The removal of the Rimonim roadblock, located near the settlement of Kokhav Hashahar, enabled the free passage of Palestinians between Ramallah and Jericho.



- **Deployment of the Palestinian security forces:** The deployment of 700 police personnel in the Jenin district after their return from training in Jordan.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It was dismantled on March 31.

<sup>4</sup> In an interview given by Radhi A'sidi, deputy commander of Palestinian national security for the Jenin district, he said that there were ongoing negotiations about the deployment of the a national security battalion in the Jenin region. It was expected to finish training in Jordan on May 15, 2008. He added that it would need two months to deploy in the Jenin region. A large number of the forces currently stationed in the Jenin region might then be sent to Jordan for intensive training courses (Ma'an News Agency, March 31).

- **Building police stations:** Approval for the establishment of police stations in B areas (where there is civilian Palestinian control) and B+ areas (where there is civilian Palestinian control with police presence for ensuring public order).
- **Easing the movement of the Palestinian security forces:** Improving the system of granting authorization for Palestinian security forces to move between A and B areas and between the various regions in Judea and Samaria to impose public order.
- **Additional equipment for the Palestinian security forces:** The delivery of 25 APCs (of 50) to the Palestinian security forces was approved; delivering 125 vehicles and pieces of logistic equipment to the Palestinian security forces was approved; examining the authorization of the list of non-lethal equipment for the Presidential Guard is under consideration.

#### ■ Civilian affairs

- **The movement of public figures:** Easing the movement of public figures and PA functionaries.
- **Easing the movement of businessmen and increasing the quota of those entitled to enter Israel** from 1,000 to 1,500.
- **Increasing the number of entrance permits into Israel territory for construction workers** by 5,000.<sup>5</sup>
- **Upgrading the crossings and easing the passage through them:** For example, opening the Shaar Ephraim crossing west of Tulkarm to commercial activity on Fridays; easing the pressure on the Kalandia crossing north of Jerusalem and the Rachel crossing between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.
- **Investors' conference in Bethlehem:** Easing the movements of businessmen, including Israeli businessmen and those expected to arrive from abroad for the investors' conference in Bethlehem on May 21-23.
- **Establishment of industrial zone:** Advancing the establishment of three industrial zones which will be built in **Jericho, Hebron** (east of the old Tarkumia crossing) and

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<sup>5</sup> Today almost 20,000 workers from Judea and Samaria enter Israel legally. Twenty thousand more work on the settlements in Judea and Samaria and an additional 5,000 work in the industrial zone in north Jerusalem.



**Muqiebleh** (north of Jenin). Turkish funding will finance the industrial zone in Hebron.<sup>6</sup> Japan and Jordan will finance the building of the agricultural industrial zone in Jericho.

- **Establishment of new residential areas:** In response to a Palestinian suggestion, two new residential areas will be built for the Palestinian population in the Ramallah district, one east of Ramallah at Dir Dibuan and the other north of Ramallah at 'Atara-'Ajjul.<sup>7</sup>
- At a press conference held by Foreign Minister Tsippi Livni, American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that significant progress for a better life for the Palestinian people and their economic existence was important. In other media interviews she said that she had been told that Israel would complete the removal of 50 roadblocks in the West Bank within a short period of time and that the United States would make certain that they had been removed.

■ The Israeli easing of restrictions clearly illustrates the differences between the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria. The Gaza Strip has military escalation and a continuing economic crisis resulting from the Hamas government's terrorist policies. In Judea and Samaria, on the other hand, because of Annapolis process, Israel is ready to advance initiatives that will improve the everyday life of the Palestinian population and their economic situation, even by taking **security risks**. However, the chances for the success of the Israeli goodwill gestures, and of the entire Annapolis process, is to a great extent dependent upon a stable security situation, disbanding the terrorist networks still active in Judea and Samaria and preventing terrorist attacks, as required by the road map.



**Israeli Foreign Minister Tsippi Livni and American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (Foreign Ministry Website, March 30).**

<sup>6</sup> Turkey initiated a renewal of the industrial zone at the Erez Crossing in the Gaza Strip, but the security situation forced them to move their venture to Judea and Samaria.

<sup>7</sup> According to the March 30 edition of the London-based newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, the residential areas will be financed by a Jordan businessman and house tens of thousands of Palestinians.