



Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center  
Israel Intelligence Heritage  
and Commemoration Center

## News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

May 20-27, 2008



Khaled Mashal meets Iranian president Ahmadinejad (Reuters, May 26).



A truck loaded with explosives blows up at the Erez Crossing ( Hamas's PALDF Forum, May 22).

### Overview

- This week events focused on the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's attempted mass-killing suicide attack at the Erez Crossing, using a truck filled with explosives. The truck blew up but no injuries were caused to the soldiers and civilians at the crossing. The Erez and other crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip continue as preferred targets for the Palestinian terrorist organizations despite the fact that aid vital to the Gaza Strip population passes through them.
- Khaled Mashal and a delegation of high-level members of Hamas's political bureau are currently on a visit to Iran, prompted by the indirect Israeli-Syrian negotiations and the Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting. During the visit senior Iranians expressed their support for Hamas and the "resistance" (i.e., Palestinian terrorism and violence). On the practical level, the London-based Arabic newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported on May 25 that Iran had agreed to increase its financial aid to Hamas and to deliver the weapons it requested, including upgraded rockets manufactured by Iran's weapons industry.

## Important Events

### Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

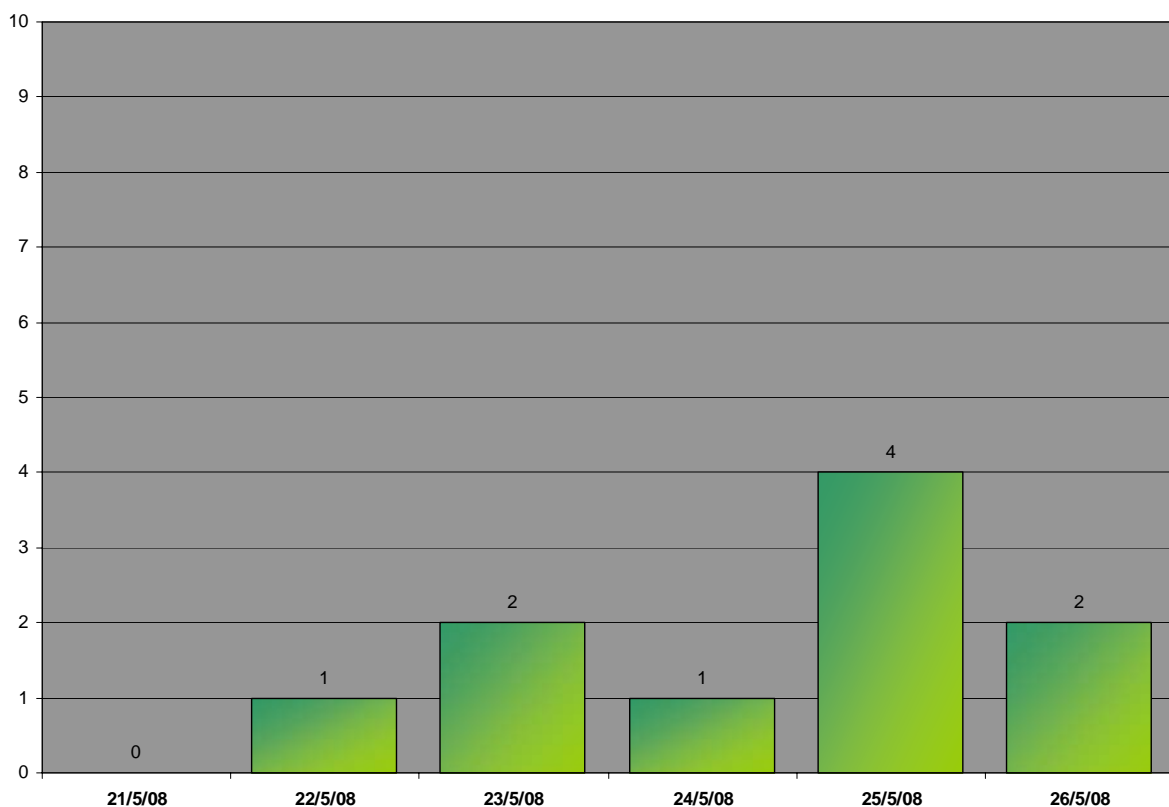
■ This past week there was a decline in the amount of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, with a total of 13 identified hits in Israeli territory compared with 37 during the previous week. Two of the rockets were 122mm standard Grad rockets, both fired on May 24 at the southern city of **Netivot**, now also a target. In addition, 23 mortar shells were fired at IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip and at Israeli population centers close to the security fence, compared with 17 the previous week.

■ During the past week Hamas's participation in rocket fire was evident. On May 23 Hamas claimed responsibility for two rockets fired at Sderot (Al-Quds Website, May 23), and for rockets and mortar shells fired at IDF forces and population centers near the Gaza Strip. The PIJ, the PFLP and Fatah also participated in the rocket fire.

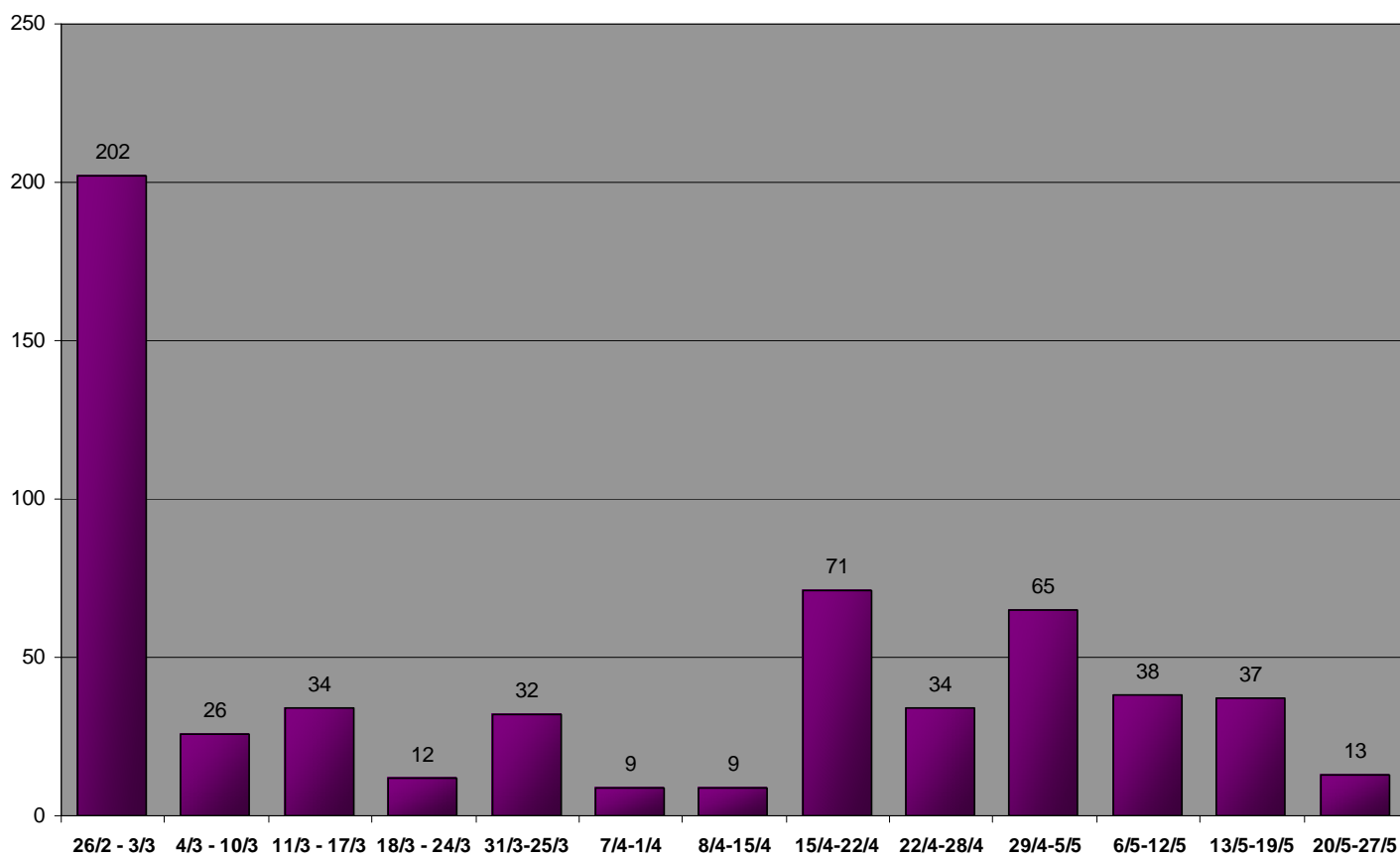


**Firing rockets into Israeli territory, from a Jerusalem Battalions video cassette claiming responsibility for an attack. Residential buildings are clearly evident (Al-Jazeera TV, May 25).**

### Daily Distribution of Identified Rocket Hits in Israel



## Rocket Hits during the Past Week Compared with Previous Weeks



## Attempted suicide bomber attack at the Erez Crossing

■ In the early morning hours of May 22 a truck carrying tons of explosives arrived at the Erez Crossing in the northern Gaza Strip and blew up. A short time later the Israeli Air Force attacked a vehicle near the crossing which was apparently to be used to abduct IDF soldiers during the attack.<sup>1</sup> A PIJ video clip claiming responsibility showed the suicide bomber, **Ibrahim Muhammad Ibrahim Nasser** sitting in front of the organization's flag and with an assault rifle slung over his shoulder, reading his "will" (Al-Alam TV, May 23). Had the attack succeeded, it would have caused many casualties among the IDF soldiers and the civilians working for the Coordination and Liaison Administration at the Erez Crossing.



The suicide bomber who carried out the attack at the Erez Crossing (Al-Alam TV, May 23).

Click [here](#) for the video of the damage caused by the explosion

<sup>1</sup> For further information see our May 22, 2008 Bulletin entitled "An attempted mass-killing attack was prevented when a truck carrying explosives blew up near the Erez Crossing" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/ct\\_220508e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_220508e.htm).

- Following the attack the Erez Crossing was closed for repairs. On May 26 it was reopened and Gazan civilians with humanitarian problems were permitted to enter Israel. The other Gaza Strip crossings operate as usual, with the exception of the Kerem Shalom Crossing which has remained closed since the attempted attack on April 19.
  
- The explosion completely destroyed the main lines which provide electricity from the power plant in Ashqelon to wide stretches of the northern Gaza Strip (Beit Lahia, Beit Hanoun, Al-Atatra and Jabaliya). Jamal al-Dardasawi of the Gaza Strip electric company called for the northern Gaza Strip to be rescued from a “humanitarian catastrophe.”
  
- In recent months the IDF has been trying to temporarily move the soldiers and civilians working for the Coordination and Liaison Administration from their base, which is the one closest to the Gaza Strip. The intention is to avoid unnecessary danger while continuing the crossing's humanitarian activities. The Hamas media represented the Israeli decision to evacuate the area as an achievement for the Palestinian terrorist organizations.

## Counterterrorist Activities

### The Gaza Strip

- During the past week the Israeli security forces continued their activities against terrorist squads attempting to carry out attacks from the Gaza Strip:
  - **May 25** – An IED was exploded by IDF forces near the security fence in the southern Gaza strip.
  
  - **May 23** – An IDF force observed two armed terrorist operatives near the security fence in the central Gaza Strip. The terrorists opened fire and the soldiers returned fire and killed them. The two were on their way to plant an IED near the security fence. They were found to be wearing bullet-proof vests and carrying light weapons and hand grenades. The PIJ's Jerusalem Battalions posted an announcement of their deaths (Jerusalem Battalions Website, May 23).
  
  - **May 23** – In the southern Gaza strip the IDF attacked a number of terrorist operatives equipped with anti-tank missiles. Hamas's Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades reported the deaths of three of their operatives (Al-Qassam Website, May 23).
  
  - **May 21** – During the morning hours an IDF force uncovered an IED planted near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. It was detonated in a controlled explosion



A rocket launcher and a number of anti-tank missiles uncovered in an IDF action in the northern Gaza Strip on May 22. The weapons were hidden on the grounds of a school on the outskirts of the town of Saja'iyah (Pictures courtesy of the IDF Spokesman, May 22).

### Judea and Samaria

■ Counterterrorist activities continued in Judea and Samaria against the terrorist organizations which continue their efforts to attack Israeli civilians and security forces, resulting in a number of detentions:

- **May 25** – During a joint Israeli security forces' activity, **Ali Issa Muhammad Turmusuni**, 24, Fatah-Tanzim operative from the Amari refugee camp in Ramallah, was detained. He is an arms dealer who was involved in shooting attacks and also prepared IEDs. In July 2007 he was included in the wanted terrorists' agreement<sup>2</sup> but nevertheless continued his terrorist activity. He was involved in planning the abductions of Israelis and in shooting attacks at the IDF crossing point near Ramallah (IDF Spokesman's Website, May 25).
- **May 22** – During a joint Israeli security forces' activity **Qais Muhammad Hussein Qadoumi**, 23, was detained. He was the last member to be arrested of the terrorist squad responsible for the drive-by shooting near the settlement of Kidumim in November 2007 which killed Idan Zoldan.<sup>3</sup>
- **May 22** – During a joint Israeli security forces' activity, **Mustafa Shaabu Nofal**, a Fatah-Tanzim operative, was detained.
- **May 21** – During a joint Israeli security forces' activity, **Ibrahim Hussan Ali Ja'bber**, 46, head of the Hamas network in Jenin, was detained.

<sup>2</sup> According to the agreement, wanted terrorists who participate in it committed themselves to abandoning terrorism and turn over their weapons.

<sup>3</sup> For further information see our November 20, 2007 Bulletin entitled "Terrorist attacks and the propaganda campaign to undermine the Annapolis meeting" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/ct\\_201107e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_201107e.htm).

## The Initiative for a Lull in the Fighting

### Israeli-Egyptian contacts

- On May 25 General Amos Gilad, head of the Ministry of Defense's political-security branch, met with Egyptian General Intelligence chief Omar Suleiman. They did not succeed in resolving the differences of opinion about the lull in the fighting, however Egypt's contacts with both Israel and Hamas are expected to continue.
- According to reports in the Israeli and Arab media, the disagreements center around lifting the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the release of Gilad Shalit, the abducted Israeli soldier. Hamas insists that the Rafah and other crossings are to be opened concurrently with the lull. Israel, on the other hand, is of the opinion that the crossing will be opened after a period of continued quiet and with genuine progress made in the issue of Gilad Shalit. In addition, Hamas refuses to agree to end the smuggling of arms, money and operatives into the Gaza Strip through the tunnels and by sea, claiming that they have no control over it (Felesteen, May 26; Al-Hayat, May 22; Filastin al-'An Website, May 21; Al-Aqsa TV, May 22; Haaretz, May 26).
- Khaled Mashal, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, currently visiting Iran, gave an interview to the Iranian news agency Fars in which he also discussed the lull initiative. He said that three Hamas conditions had to be met: an immediate cessation of Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, the lifting of the blockade and the opening of the crossings. He noted that Hamas talks with Egypt regarding the lull were being carried out from a position of strength and threatened that if the blockade continued it would be "broken" by Hamas (i.e., by force) (Fars News Agency, May 26).

### Hamas organizes "popular activity" to break through the blockade of the Gaza Strip

- Hamas has recently organized "popular activity" to break through the blockade of the Gaza Strip while maintaining contacts with Egypt regarding the lull. On May 22 Hamas organized a demonstration at the Karni Crossing attended by several hundred civilians.
- The procession approached the crossing as planned while stones were thrown at IDF forces. Initially the IDF force tried to disperse the



**Demonstration at the Karni Crossing on May 22, organized by Hamas (Al-Aqsa TV, May 22).**

demonstrators with riot control equipment. When armed men were observed among them, the IDF forces fired at their legs, and fire was returned (Ynet, May 22). Hamas issued a report stating that one of the demonstrators, a 22-year old man, had been killed and that dozens had been wounded (Palestine-info Website, May 22).

■ The Hamas newspaper Al-Risala, which covered the demonstration, wrote that **Hamas could exert “popular pressure” to open the Rafah Crossing**, and by other demonstrations which would also **target the Egyptian border crossing**. According to the paper, on Thursday, May 29, a similar demonstration is expected to be held at the **Sufa Crossing** (Al-Risala, May 26). Ashraf Abu Diyya, a spokesman for Hamas “public activities,” said that such events would continue in the coming days and increase “to break through the blockade imposed on our people under the shadow of pan-Arab and international silence” (Filastin al-‘An Website, May 22).

## Khaled Mashal's Visit to Iran

### Khaled Mashal receives assurance of Iranian support for Hamas During his visit to Tehran



Khaled Mashal meets Sayid Jalili the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (Al-Alam TV, May 24).

■ **Khaled Mashal**, head of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus, arrived in Iran on May 24 for a visit, heading a political bureau delegation. The visit was prompted by the Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting in the Gaza Strip and the indirect contacts for a peace initiative between Israel and Syria. Khaled Mashal met with high-level Iranian officials, including **Leader Khamenei**; president **Ahmadinejad**; **Rafsanjani**, chairman of the Expediency Council; **Sayid Jalili**, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council; **Manuchehr Mottaki**, foreign minister; **Jaafari**, commander of the Revolutionary Guards; **Amid Qassem Suleimani**, commander of the Qods Forces; and senior members of Iran's military industry. **Khaled Mashal**

also participated in forum entitled “The End of Israel,” held at the Technical College of Tehran University.

■ During the meetings high-level Iranians expressed their support for Hamas and its terrorist strategy (“the resistance”). Iranian president Ahmadinejad said that the victories in Palestine and Lebanon (i.e., the victories of Hamas and Hezbollah) were the result of “resistance and persistence” and would continue in the future (Maher, May 26). Rafsanjani said that the path of “resistance” (i.e., Palestinian terrorism) was the most important means for the Palestinian to achieve their rights (ISNA News Agency, May 26).

■ Khaled Mashal thanked the Iranian people and expressed his certainty that Syria would do nothing to damage its relations with Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran (Fars News Agency, May 26). **Ismail Radwan**, a senior Hamas member, denied the news items reporting that the Hamas delegation had gone to Iran to discuss moving its political bureau from Damascus to Tehran.<sup>4</sup> He said that Syrian strategy included preserving Palestinian principles and that it would not abandon those principles for the sake of direct or indirect contacts with Israel.

**Muhammad Nassr**, a high-ranking member of Hamas’s political bureau, said that Syria had the right to try to reacquire its lands but that Hamas knew it would not be done at the expense of the Palestinians (Qudsnet Website, May 25).

■ On the practical level, the London-based Arabic newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat reported that the Iranians had agreed to increase support for Hamas to \$150 million in the second half of 2008, and promised to deliver the weapons Hamas wanted. According to the news item the aid will be given on the condition that Hamas holds neither direct nor indirect negotiations with Israel. It was also reported that the commander of the Revolutionary Guards promised Khaled Mashal they would deliver upgraded rockets manufactured especially for Hamas at the Bakri Center [for the manufacture of weapons] in Tehran (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, May 25).



Khaled Mashal at a press conference in Iran after a meeting with the Iranian foreign minister (Al-Jazeera TV, May 24).

<sup>4</sup> On May 25 the Jerusalem Post reported that the possibility of moving the Hamas political bureau from Damascus to Tehran had been raised in the talks.



## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### The Palestinian investment conference in Bethlehem

- On May 21-23 an investment conference was held in Bethlehem to encourage investments in the Palestinian Authority and Gaza Strip. At the end of the conference PA prime minister Salam Fayyad said that it had produced initiatives and projects worth **\$1.4 billion**, that it had fulfilled its objectives and that the agreements signed would give the Palestinian economy a push forward (Wafa News Agency, May 23).
- The conference was quiet and there were no special events, with the exception of a incident which occurred when the Qatari representatives were insulted by members of the radical Islamic Liberation Party, when they arrived at the Temple Mount to pray on Friday. Members of the Libration Party, whose activity has increased in Judea and Samaria during the past year yelled "Palestine needs jihad fighters, not investors."