



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

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

September 9-16, 2008



Another violation of the lull arrangement: the site of a rocket hit in Sderot, September 14 (Photo: Zeev Tractman, September 14).

Overview

- This week there were two more violations of the lull arrangement. A rocket hit Sderot and an IED was detonated near the security fence. In response to the rocket fire Israel closed the crossings into the Gaza Strip.
- An Israeli soldier was stabbed and critically wounded by a Palestinian at the Almog junction in the Jordan Valley. A child was stabbed by a Palestinian who infiltrated the Samarian settlement of Yizhar. The Palestinian also set fire to two buildings. Following the attack, settlers from Yizhar rioted in the village of 'Asira al-Qibliya, wounding three local residents. The IDF separated the settlers and villagers.
- The counterterrorism bureau of the Israeli prime minister's office issued a travel warning to the effect that there was a "concrete, immediate and serious threat" that Israelis would be abducted from Sinai's beaches and smuggled into the Gaza Strip, and that Hezbollah was involved in the plan. Senior Hamas officials threatened that Israelis would be abducted if Israel did not meet its demands to release Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Gilad Shalit.

Important Events

The Gaza Strip

- This past week there were **two violations** of the lull arrangement:
 - **September 14:** A rocket hit was identified in an open area near a residential area in Sderot, causing a fire. The rocket fell in a building site about 50 meters (about 55 yards) from inhabited houses. One local resident was treated for shock. Following the rocket attack the minister of defense ordered the closing of the crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip.
 - **September 11:** An IED was detonated in an attack on IDF forces patrolling near the security fence around the Gaza Strip, south of the post at Kissufim. A fictitious organization calling itself "The Martyr Ayman Faiz Companies of the Unity of God" claimed responsibility for the attack (Qudsnet website of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, September 11).

- Since the lull arrangement went into effect, **18 rocket hits** have been identified in Israeli territory and **15 mortar shells** have been fired at Israel. **Three additional rockets** were fired but landed inside the Gaza Strip. There were also **two IEDs** detonated against IDF forces near the security fence.

Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley

Palestinian stabs soldier

- **September 15:** An IDF soldier was stabbed and seriously wounded by a Palestinian terrorist at the Almog junction north of the Dead Sea, and his gun was stolen. Police arriving at the scene detained the terrorist and retrieved the gun. Later the same day an IDF force in Ramallah detained a Palestinian suspected of involvement in the stabbing and turned him over to the security forces for interrogation (IDF Spokesman's website, September 15).

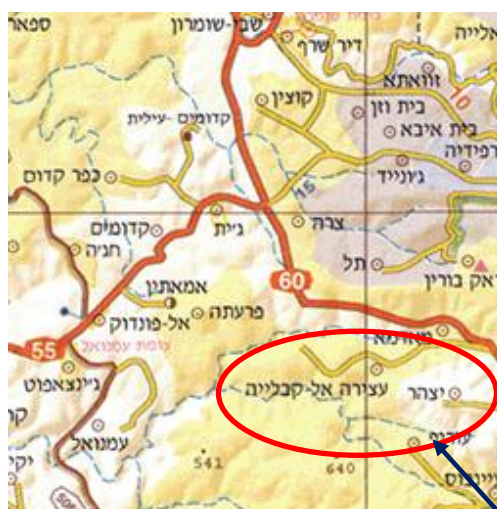


Knife used by the terrorist to stab an IDF soldier at the Almog junction (Photo: Israeli Police spokesman for the Judea and Samaria district, September 15).

Attack at Yizhar, a settlement in Samaria, followed by a riot in 'Asira al-Qibliya

■ On September 13 a Palestinian terrorist infiltrated the Shalhevet Yam settlers' outpost in Samaria, located near the village of Yizhar, southwest of Nablus. He set fire to a house. In an attempt to set fire to another house, he attacked a nine-year old boy who called for help. The terrorist stabbed the boy, pushed him out of the house and escaped. The child was not seriously wounded and was taken to a hospital for treatment.

■ Following the attack, settlers from Yizhar went to the nearby Palestinian village of 'Asira al-Qibliya, violently confronting the residents and rioting. Three Palestinians were wounded, two of them moderately and one slightly. Forces of the IDF, the Border Guards and the Israeli Police arrived on the scene, separated the rioters and local Palestinian residents and confiscated the settlers' weapons (IDF Spokesman's website, September 13).



Scene of the events at Yizhar and the Palestinian village of 'Asira al-Qibliya.

Soldier attacked at the Hawara roadblock

■ **September 10:** A Palestinian woman came to the Hawara roadblock south of Nablus and threw acid in the face of a soldier, who was not seriously harmed. She then fled the scene. She had come from the direction of Nablus and tried to cross the roadblock through the humanitarian lane meant only for urgent cases, which are not examined. The soldier received medical attention at the roadblock and was then evacuated to a hospital for further treatment.

Increase in local disturbances in Judea and Samaria

- This past week an increase was reported in local disturbances in Judea and Samaria:
 - **September 13:** A 16-year old Palestinian was wounded during a riot near the village of **Tekoa**, south of Bethlehem, and later died of his wounds. The rioters blocked roads and threw stones, rocks and iron bars. An IDF force arrived on the scene after stones were thrown at a tourist bus passing through and two American women were wounded. The force used riot control equipment and fired a single shot. According to the IDF, there has recently

been an increase in stone-throwing incidents near **Tekoa**. The circumstances of the attack are under IDF investigation (IDF Spokesman's website, September 13).

- **September 12:** A Border Police officer and soldier were pelted with stones in a violent riot near Ni'lin, west of Ramallah. The forces used riot control equipment to disperse the stone-throwers. There was also a riot in Bila'in, west of Ramallah. Two weeks ago two Border Policemen were wounded when rioters threw stones at them near the security fence at Ni'lin (IDF Spokesman's website, September 12).

Counterterrorism Activities

Judea and Samaria

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria:
 - **September 16:** Following an increase in the number of Molotov cocktails used to attack the village of Beit-El during the past few days, a counterterrorism activity was undertaken in the region. An IDF force saw three Palestinians carrying Molotov cocktails and fired at their legs, hitting two of them. The two were taken to a hospital in Israel for treatment and then transferred to the security forces for interrogation (IDF Spokesman's website, September 16).
 - **September 14:** An IDF force operating in Qalqilya uncovered more than 160 kilograms (350 lbs) and 56 liters (15 gallons) of dangerous substances. On the same day in a different incident 50 kilograms (110 lbs) of potassium nitrate were found at the Tarqumya crossing, northwest of Hebron. The materials can be used in the manufacture of weapons and explosives, and are therefore illegal in Judea and Samaria (IDF Spokesman's website, September 15).
 - **September 9:** Security forces operating in Jenin uncovered a pipe bomb weighing 15 kilograms (33 lbs), which was detonated in a controlled explosion by an IDF bomb squad.



Pipe bomb uncovered in Jenin on September 9 (IDF Spokesman's website, September 10).

Crossings opened and roadblocks removed in Judea and Samaria

■ On September 11 the Halhul crossing, which connects the Tarqumya crossing and the city of and Hebron, was opened to passenger vehicles and trucks during daylight hours. Over the past few months the IDF has removed several central roadblocks in Judea and Samaria, as well as about 100 barriers. Their removal significantly improved the Palestinians' freedom of movement, which contributed to a reawakening of the Palestinian economy (See below, The Internal Palestinian Arena).

Lebanon

■ Israel Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that **Israeli security had recently prevented two attempted Hezbollah attacks against Israelis abroad**. He said that "there is a threat because Hezbollah blames Israel for the assassination of Imad Moughnieh and wants revenge. In cooperation with foreign agencies we have already prevented at least two attacks in various corners of the world..." (Translated from the Hebrew edition of Haaretz, September 11).

The Lull Arrangement – Update

The Gaza Strip crossings

■ At the beginning of the past week activity continued at the Gaza Strip crossings, with a daily average of 80 trucks delivering goods through the Sufa crossing. Following the rocket fire on September 14 the crossings were ordered closed as of September 15. Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered the crossings closed on September 16 as well (Announcements from the Ministry of Defense, September 14 and 15).

■ **Hamas** severely criticized the closing of the crossings, calling it "a premeditated disruption" of the most important article of the lull arrangement (as usual **totally ignoring the fact that the closing was a response to rocket fire into Israel**). Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** accused Israel of "using imaginary excuses to close the crossings for long periods of time" (Ramattan News Agency, September 15). **Sami Abu Zuhri**, another Hamas spokesman, claimed that it was more proof that Israel was not serious about keeping to the lull arrangement (PalMedia website, September 15). **The Palestinian Islamic Jihad** called the closing "excuses without foundations" and called upon the other Palestinian terrorist organizations "to reexamine the advisability of the lull arrangement" (Nidaa al-Quds website, September 15).

The Rafah crossing

■ **Taleb Abu Sha'ar**, minister of endowments in the Hamas administration, said that Egypt had authorized exit visas for 600 Gazans pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, and that they were expected to leave on September 20. He said that 2,200 Gazans had filled out applications, and that the Egyptian authorities had confiscated the passports of 500 of those whose applications had been denied (PalMedia website, September 16).

Khaled Mashal on Gilad Shalit

■ Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus, gave a speech in which he mentioned Gilad Shalit, the abducted Israeli soldier. He said that "Hamas has not caused delays in the negotiations...Hamas objects to the Zionist blackmail [whose purpose is] to lower the number [of Palestinian prisoners who will be released in return for Gilad Shalit], and **wants to complete the deal as soon as possible**. We will cooperate with all efforts because we are interested in achieving our goal" (Palestine-info website¹).

Threats to abduct Israelis

■ The counterterrorism bureau of the Israeli prime minister's office issued a travel warning that "threats of terrorism in Sinai are getting worse." According to the announcement, "**a concrete, immediate and serious threat has been exposed of abducting Israelis from the beaches of the Sinai peninsula and smuggling them into the Gaza Strip**. The involvement of **Hezbollah** in the plan increases its seriousness." Israelis have been requested to leave Sinai immediately, not to go to Egypt and if there, to leave as soon as possible.

■ According to counterterrorism division head Brigadier General (Res.) Nitzan Nuriel, "this is the first time we have seen **Hezbollah** preparing to abduct Israelis in Sinai" (Haaretz, September 16). The Israeli security forces are concerned that Palestinian terrorists handled by Hezbollah will abduct people vacationing in the Sinai peninsula, especially Israelis on the beaches (*ibid.*).

■ In the meantime, senior Hamas figures **continued threatening to abduct Israelis** if Israel did not meet their demands:

- **Fathi Hamad**, director general of Hamas's Al-Aqsa communications network, said that Hamas's jihad fighters "**will continue the path of abduction** until, with the help of Allah,

¹ Khaled Mashal made no mention of Gilad Shalit in the version of his speech broadcast by Al-Jazeera TV on September 14.

a deal goes through..." He also said that the abduction of Gilad Shalit has not convinced Israel to complete the deal, and that as a result Hamas operatives "**are planning many more abductions**, until the enemy is convinced to go through with this deal and others, with the help of Allah" (Al-Aqsa TV, September 8; Al-Jazeera TV, September 7).

- **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a senior Hamas figure, warned Israel against taking military action to force Hamas to back down regarding Gilad Shalit. He said that any Israeli action in the Gaza Strip would **lead to additional soldiers being abducted** and to an increase in the number of Palestinian prisoners whom Israel will be forced to release.

The Annapolis Process

Abu Mazen expected to meet the Israeli Prime Minister and the American President

■ A meeting took place on September 16 between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen, described by Al-Hayat as "the last chance meeting" (Al-Hayat, September 15). **Saeb Erikat**, chief Palestinian negotiator, said that the meeting between Abu Mazen and American President Bush would take place on September 25. Before that, Abu Mazen is expected to participate in the opening session of the UN General Assembly.

Abu Mazen interviewed by Haaretz

■ Palestinian Chairman Abu Mazen was interviewed by Haaretz correspondents Akiva Eldar and Avi Issacharoff (From the Haaretz website, September 13):

- **The Annapolis process has not borne fruit:** Abu Mazen noted that the Oslo accords were signed 15 years ago "and we are still far from an agreement." He said that "we have to cling to implementing the solution of two countries for two peoples. It is the best possible proposition, but don't prevent its implementation and don't force people into a corner..." He added he admired Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert very much, but that "we will honor what the [Israeli] public decides. We will conduct negotiations with any prime minister elected in Israel..." He also said he had his doubts as to whether a peace agreement would be reached by the end of the year, even if Ehud Olmert retained his position. "So far," he said, "I cannot say that there has been an agreement on a single issue. The gap between the sides is very large..."

- **Willingness to compromise on the number of refugees who will return to Israel as part of the so-called “right to return”:** Abu Mazen was asked if it were clear to the Palestinians that they would return only to the future Palestinian state. His answer was “**Not at all**. This issue is not at all clear. There are today five million Palestinian refugees whose forefathers were expelled from the area of Israel, not from the West Bank and Gaza. We understand that if we demand of you that all five million return to Israel, the State of Israel would be destroyed. But we must talk about compromise and see to what numbers you can agree.” He added that Israel had to accept its responsibility for the problem of the refugees and to discuss implementing “the right to return” as an actual fact. He said that the refugees who did not return to Israel could return to the Palestinian state or, should they so decide, remain where they were and they and the countries which had given them refuge would be compensated. He said that the matter of the property of absentee owners was “a central issue which Israel tends to ignore.”

- **Relations with Hamas and parliamentary and presidential elections:** Abu Mazen said that the national unity government of professionals which would be formed in the future would have to honor all the commitments and agreements signed by the PA, such as the road map. “We cannot agree to any initiative that does not accept it. And naturally the Arab peace initiative [of 2002] must also be accepted.” As to when his term of office would end, he answered that it was being discussed. “I think that the elections for parliament and the presidency should take place together, in January 2010. We will decide, and issue a presidential order accordingly. And we will definitely demand that the elections be held in Jerusalem as well.” He said that “Gaza and the West Bank must unite... But we will not use force to do that. There are contacts for reconciliation being conducted by the Egyptians...”

■ Senior Hamas figures attacked his positions, especially regarding “the right to return:”

- **Khaled Mashal**, head of Hamas’s political bureau in Damascus, said “just imagine, a frightened Palestinian leader warns that our agreement to the return of five million or six million is not reasonable because of concern over the existence of the State of Israel...” He said that Palestinians should not think about Israeli interests but only about Palestinian interests: “The right to return is in danger, Jerusalem is in danger, the Palestinian people suffering under the occupation is in danger...” He had nothing but contempt for Israeli proposals to let 6,000 or 20,000 refugees into Israel, saying that no Zionist leader would agree to Palestinian demands regarding the “right to return” or matters concerning Jerusalem. The Oslo accords, he said, “bore barren fruit...” (Al-Jazeera TV, September 14).

- **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, attacked Abu Mazen's willingness to waive the right of five million refugees to return to Israel and to compromise on the number that would return. He said it meant "obliterating the right to return...obliterating our basic principles and our rights..." He added that Abu Mazen did not have the right to make such concessions "because there is a national consensus that all the refugees will return to their families and to the houses they left." He attacked the negotiations being held by Abu Mazen with Israel, saying that "they will bear no fruit" and would not influence Hamas's decision "to make sure the Zionist-American plans collapsed, along with President Abu Mazen..." (PalMedia website, September 13).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Violent confrontations in the Gaza Strip

■ On September 15 violent confrontations broke out in the western part of Gaza City between Hamas's security forces and members of the Dughmush clan, one of the most important and powerful clans in the Gaza Strip. The confrontations began when the security forces attempted to detain two men, members of the clan, wanted for criminal activity. Ten members of the clan were killed and 46 injured. One Hamas security force policeman was killed and another wounded.

Palestinian economy in Judea and Samaria recovers

■ According to data supplied by the Israeli Civilian Administration, during the first half of 2008 the Palestinian economy in Judea and Samaria began to recover. There was a significant growth in the movement of merchandise and daily wages rose from 70 to 76.9 shekels. Some of the factors behind the recovery were the easing of the IDF's restrictions on travel between cities in Judea and Samaria, an increase in the number of permits for trade and employment in Israel and Israeli settlements and the large involvement of international institutions in enterprises for the welfare of the Palestinian population.

Intensive Palestinian security force activity against Hamas institutions in Judea and Samaria continues

■ On September 9 the PA military intelligence service announced that **propaganda and incitement material had been seized in six different mosques in Hebron**, based on information supplied by detained Hamas activists. Many of the mosques in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip are **under Hamas control**. They serve as stages for clerics affiliated with Hamas and as focal points for anti-Israeli and anti-PA incitement, as well as hiding places for terrorist operatives and weapons. In addition, inflammatory material attacking the PA and illegal bills and receipts were taken from the Palestine Polytechnic University in Hebron (Ma'an News Agency, September 9).

■ Hamas reported that PA general intelligence had invaded a number of local Hamas-affiliated radio stations in Hebron and Ramallah and confiscated their transmitters (Hamas Forum, September 15). Hamas-affiliated media also reported that on the night of September 14 Fatah operatives shot at the car of Jamal al-Tawil, the mayor of Al-Bireh, near his house. According to one report, the shooters wanted to protest the decision to close stalls in the city market belonging to Fatah activists (Al-Bayan website, September 15).



Palestinian police patrolling in Hebron (Amir Awad for Reuters, September 11).