



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

July 14-21, 2009



The abandoned building in Khirbet Silim after a Hezbollah weapons and ammunition store exploded (IDF Spokesman, July 16, 2009).

Overview

- The relative calm in the western Negev continued this past week. Two notable events occurred: Palestinians terrorist operatives opened fire on an IDF force patrolling along the border security fence (a frequent occurrence these past weeks) and a rocket fell south of Kibbutz Nahal Oz (without causing casualties or damage).
- The Fatah-Hamas dialogue has stalled. There are continuing arguments within Fatah over its sixth conference, scheduled for Bethlehem in early August. Broadcast by Al-Jazeera TV, Farouk Qaddoumi accused Mahmoud Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan of plotting with the Israelis and Americans to assassinate Arafat. In response the Palestinian Authority decided to close the station's offices in the West Bank. The decision was later revoked, however the Palestinian Authority continues to press its suit against Al-Jazeera TV.

On the outskirts of the village of Khirbet Silim, near Bint Jbeil in south Lebanon, weapons and ammunition stored by Hezbollah exploded in an abandoned building on July 14. The incident proves that Hezbollah continues strengthening its military network in the South Lebanese villages in gross violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Important Events

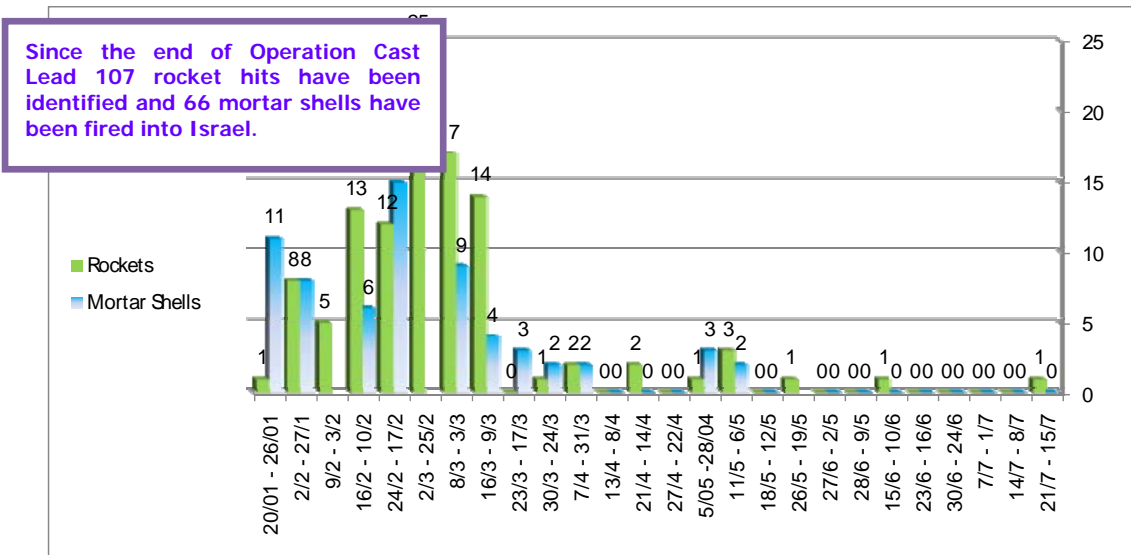
Gaza Strip

Rocket and mortar shell fire

- **On July 16 a rocket hit** was identified south of Kibbutz Nahal Oz. There were no casualties and no damage was done. No organization claimed responsibility for the attack. **It was the first rocket attack in a month** (the last rocket fell near Kibbutz Alumim on June 13).

- **On July 19** armed Palestinians launched RPGs and mortar shells at an IDF force patrolling the border fence near Kibbutz Nahal Oz. The soldiers returned fire. According to Palestinian reports, three individuals were wounded by IDF fire (Oudsnet website, July 20, 2009). No organization claimed responsibility for the attack.

Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory since the end of Operation Cast Lead¹



¹ The statistics do not include the mortar shells fired at IDF soldiers patrolling the border security fence which fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Rebuilding the military networks in the Gaza Strip

- The various terrorist organizations exploit the relative quiet in the Gaza Strip to rebuild their military networks. A correspondent for Russia Today TV accompanied operatives of a network calling itself “the Mujahideen Brigades” as they trained. He reported that Operation Cast Lead did not destroy the military networks in the Gaza Strip and that today they were investing great efforts to rebuild their military capabilities. The correspondent also visited a site for rocket manufacture. According to “Abu Bilal,” the network’s spokesman, the Mujahideen Brigades developed a new rocket called the Hafz, which has a range of more than 12 kilometers, or about 7.5 miles (Russia Today TV, July 14, 2009).



A correspondent from Russia Today TV visits a rocket manufacturing site. Left: A spokesman for the so-called Mujahideen Brigades holds a rocket, developed by the network (Russia Today TV, July 14, 2009).

Molotov cocktails and stones thrown in Judea and Samaria

- Molotov cocktails and rocks continue being used for attacks in Judea and Samaria:
 - **July 19:** An Israeli woman suffered slight injuries when Palestinians threw stones at her near the Jewish settlement in Hebron. Palestinians also threw stones at an Israeli vehicle west of Hebron. There were no casualties and no damage was done.
 - **July 19:** An IDF force detained a Palestinian who threw a pipe bomb at the security fence near the village of Zeita, southwest of Jenin. The bomb was detonated by Israeli demolitions experts. Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack (Qudsnet website, July 19, 2009).
 - **July 16:** An Israeli man suffered slight injuries when Palestinians threw stones at his car west of Bethlehem. The vehicle was damaged as well.
 - **July 14:** Palestinians threw stones at an Israeli vehicle east of Qalqilya. There were no casualties and but the vehicle was damaged. An IDF force searched the region and detained the two stone-throwers.

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

- During the past week an average of 100 trucks a day entered the Gaza Strip through the crossings with Israel to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Egypt security force activities against the tunnel industry

- The Egyptian security forces have intensified their activities against the tunnels in the region of Egyptian Rafah. This past week they blew up tunnels in a built-up area, leading to the collapse of the buildings under which the tunnels had been dug (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, July 16, 2009). In Rafah on July 18 they uncovered half a ton of explosives ready for smuggling into the Gaza Strip. In another instance they found a bag in the Al-Dahaniya area containing ten new mortar shells with Hebrew inscriptions (Masrawy Egyptian Portal, July 18, 2009).

A convoy of pro-Palestinian activists enters the Gaza Strip

- On July 15 the "Life Line 2" convoy entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, allowed by Egypt to stay there for 24 hours. The convoy took with it only half of its 12 trucks of medicine and other humanitarian assistance. There were 169 pro-Palestinian activists, among them anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox Naturei Karta rabbis. They visited sites damaged during Operation Cast Lead and met with senior members of the Hamas de-facto administration, including its head, Ismail Haniya (Filastin al-'An website, Qudsnet website, July 16, 2009). A Lebanese organization calling itself "Free Gaza" announced that in the next two months it would send a boat to the Gaza Strip with humanitarian assistance and for the first time, **Palestinian refugees, in order to emphasize the so-called "right of return"** (*Al-Safir*, July 14, 2009).



Delegation of pro-Palestinian activists, including members of the Naturei Karta, at a meeting with Ismail Haniya in Gaza (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, July 19, 2009).

■ On July 14 Hamas organized two demonstrations of children from its summer camps, who were brought in to protest the so-called “siege of the Gaza Strip.” One demonstration, attended by 1,000 children, was held in front of the power plant at the al-Mughazi refugee camp. The other, attended by 300 children, was held at the Rafah crossing and organized by Hamas’s information ministry, which was also responsible for collecting the children from the camps (Masrawy Egyptian Portal, July 14, 2009).

The battle for hearts and minds: a full-length Hamas movie premieres

■ As part of Hamas’s intensive propaganda campaign held since Operation Cast Lead, on July 17 there was a **festive premiere of Hamas’s first full-length movie, attended by Ismail Haniya, head of the Hamas de-facto administration.** The movie was called “Imad Aqel,”² and was produced by Hamas’s Al-Aqsa media network.

■ The movie tells the story of a commander of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’s military-terrorist wing, killed in a firefight with IDF forces in November 1993. The movie cost \$200,000 to produce and the scenario was written by Mahmoud al-Zahar, a senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip. It contrasts Imad Aqel’s “bravery” with the “helplessness and inferiority of Israel.” The actresses wear long dresses and are veiled, and during the showing men and women sat separately.



Left: Advertisement for the Imad Aqel movie (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, July 19, 2009). Right: Audience at the Islamic University in Gaza City (Aqsatv, July 17, 2009).

² **Imad Hassan Ibrahim Aqel** (1971-1993) was a commander of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’s military-terrorist wing. Aqel was involved in killing 11 IDF soldiers and in the murders of an Israeli civilian and four Palestinians.

The Political Arena

Statements regarding the building in East Jerusalem

■ In view of the political argument around the construction of Shepherd's Hotel compound in East Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** began the weekly government meeting on July 19 with the following statement: "...the united Jerusalem is the capital of the Jewish people and of the State of Israel. **Our sovereignty over it is cannot be challenged**; this means – inter alia – that residents of Jerusalem may purchase apartments in all parts of the city." He added that "This is the policy of an open city, an undivided city that has no separation according to religion or national affiliation. We cannot accept the idea that Jews will not have the right to live and purchase in all parts of Jerusalem" (Israeli Prime Minister's Office website, July 19, 2009).

■ Netanyahu's statement provoked harsh reactions from the Palestinian Authority. **Saeb Erekat**, chief PLO negotiator, said that it was proof of Israel's provocations against the requests made by the international community to honor its commitments and stop the building in the settlements. He also said that such statements were made to exchange the negotiations [between Israel and the Palestinians] for delays (BBC in Arabic, July 19, 2009).

Hamas leader meets with the Russian deputy foreign minister

■ On July 18 a Hamas delegation headed by Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, met with **deputy Russian foreign minister Alexander Sultanov**. Khaled Mashaal told him that it was Israel that was delaying the prisoner exchange (*Al-Hayat*, July 20, 2009). With regard to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, he said that Hamas "would not take an attitude that would contradict the growing international interest in peace in the Middle East (Kuwait News Agency, July 19, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The internal Palestinian dialogue stalls

■ On July 19 Fatah and Hamas delegations arrived in Cairo for preparatory talks before another round of the internal Palestinian dialogue set for July 25-28. The talks do not seem to have narrowed the gap between the sides. One of the main topics on the agenda was setting the date for Palestinian Legislative Council elections and presidency of the Palestinian Authority. It was suggested that the elections be postponed for a year, during which Mahmoud Abbas would remain

in his position as chairman while Hamas would have another year of controlling the Palestinian Legislative Council.

■ Hamas objected to the suggestion. **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, said that Hamas objected to having Mahmoud Abbas remain in his position for another year. He said that Hamas had agreed to postpone the elections until January 25, 2010, but would insist that they be held then (Al-Jazeera TV, July 20, 2009). **Ayman Taha**, another senior Hamas figure, said that otherwise, no agreement could be reached on the issue and that the matter would remain on the agenda (German News Agency, July 20, 2009). **Mahmoud Abbas** said that elections had to be held immediately to allow the people to decide (Wafa News Agency, July 20, 2009).

Internal Fatah disagreements over the sixth movement conference

■ There have been tensions within Fatah in recent weeks regarding the movement's sixth conference, which is supposed to be held in Bethlehem on **August 4**. The tensions stem from long-standing internal disputes lately manifested by the removal of the names of many senior Fatah activists from the list of 1,550 conference representatives (Ma'an News Agency, July 19, 2009). Tensions have also been exposed between Fatah and Hamas over Hamas threats to prevent the Fatah delegation from leaving the Gaza Strip. **Salah al-Bardawil**, a member of the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that Hamas would not sabotage the Fatah conference, but added that there were currently security charges against the organization's activists in the Gaza Strip and it would be hard for its members to leave, and that anyone who wanted to go would be required to lodge a request in writing (QudsPress News Agency, July 20, 2009).

■ In view of the serious disagreements among senior Fatah officials, **Farouk Qaddoumi**, a member of Fatah's central committee, held a press conference broadcast by **Al-Jazeera TV**. He accused Mahmoud Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan of plotting with former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East in the Bush administration, to kill Yasser Arafat. He demanded that Mahmoud Abbas resign immediately from both the presidency and as head of the PLO's executive committee (Al-Jazeera TV, July 15, 2009). In response, Suha Arafat, Yasser Arafat's widow, wrote an open letter in which she completely rejected Farouk Qaddoumi's claims (*Al-Ayyam*, June 20, 2009).

■ In response to the accusations, on July 15 the Palestinians decided to close Al-Jazeera TV's offices in the West Bank and to sue the station for "giving large amounts of air time to incitement against the Palestinian Authority and the PLO" (Palestinian information ministry, July 15, 2009). The decision to shut down the channel, which **systematically serves Hamas propaganda**, was accompanied by harsh criticism from Hamas, and even from groups within the Palestinian

Authority. On July 18 Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad decided to reinstate Al-Jazeera TV in the West Bank, but not to revoke the Palestinian Authority's suit against it.

The Northern Arena

Incidents in south Lebanon reveal that Hezbollah's military is active south of the Litani River in gross violation of Security Council Resolution 1701

■ This past week, the third anniversary of the second Lebanon war, **a number of incidents occurred along the Israel-Lebanon border**, illustrating the fragility of the quiet since the war ended. They showed that despite the limitations placed on it by UN Security Council Resolution 1701, Hezbollah maintains a covert military presence in the villages south of the Litani River where it stores weapons and ammunition in populated areas. The events also illustrate the **helplessness of the UNIFIL forces** in dealing with Hezbollah and the practical collaboration on the ground between the Lebanese army and Hezbollah:

- **On July 14** an explosion occurred in an abandoned building on the outskirts of the village of **Khirbet Silim**, near Bint Jbeil, south of the Litani River and 15 kilometers, or a little over nine miles, from the Israeli border. The cause of the explosion is unknown, but the noise, size of the explosion and the damage it did indicate that the building had been **used to store weapons and ammunition** (IDF Spokesman, July 16, 2009). Hezbollah sources falsely reported that it was the result of the detonation of ammunition remaining from the second Lebanon war (Al-Ilaf website, July 16, 2009). UNIFIL forces, which managed to enter the area only on the following day, found a deserted building which had apparently served as a weapons and ammunition store for Hezbollah. They found rockets, ammunition for machine guns, and mortar and artillery shells.
- **On July 18** the French brigade of the UNIFIL forces tried to search a house between Khirbet Silim and Bir al-Sanasil because they suspected weapons had been transferred there from the warehouse that blew up in Khirbet Silim. The soldiers were met with resistance from about one hundred local residents. In the ensuing confrontation 14 UNIFIL soldiers incurred slight injuries (AP, July 18, 2009). The Lebanese army expressed its regrets for their injuries and said that it would investigate the events (Lebanon Now website, July 19, 2009).
- **On July 17** Lebanese civilians demonstrated in the region of the Shebaa Farms to protest the embankment and outpost they claimed the IDF had erected south of the border.³ They claimed they the IDF activities represented "an Israeli violation of Resolution 1701." As a provocation, some of demonstrators crossed the border into Israeli territory, **waved**

³ In recent weeks the IDF has done work in the region but has not erected any outpost.

Lebanese and Hezbollah flags and returned to Lebanese territory. The IDF refrained from taking action against the demonstrators. UNIFIL soldiers near the area tried to prevent the provocation from deteriorating into a violent incident.



Lebanese demonstrators in the Shebaa Farms region (Al-Alam TV, July 18, 2009).