



The Meir Amit Intelligence and  
Terrorism Information Center

April 10, 2011

## **Latest escalation in terrorist activities from the Gaza Strip**

**The situation on the ground as of 12:00 hours, April  
10, 2011<sup>1</sup>**

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**Israeli school bus attacked by Hamas with an anti-tank missile (Photo by Adi Israel, courtesy of NRG)**

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<sup>1</sup> Supplement to the March 30-April 5, 2011 News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

## Overview

1. On the afternoon of April 7, 2011, Hamas fired a guided anti-tank missile at an Israeli school bus in the western Negev. Following that event, over the weekend there was an escalation of approximately **120 rockets and mortar shells fired at Israeli population centers** in southern Israel, **including Beersheba, Ashdod and Ashqelon**, the three largest cities in the south. Eight rockets were intercepted by the Israeli Iron Dome aerial defense system, preventing direct hits on cities in the south (the system is not used to intercept rockets falling in open areas). After a relatively quiet night, intermittent rocket and mortar shell fire attacks continued on April 10.

2. **In retaliation, Israeli aircraft, armored forces and infantry attacked a series of terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip.** Among them were terrorist squads on their way to launch rockets and mortar shells into Israel, terrorist networks and posts, tunnels used to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip and sites for producing and stockpiling weapons. Seventeen Palestinians were killed, among them terrorist operatives and apparently several civilians, who were killed inadvertently. One of the terrorist operatives killed was Taysir Abu Sneimah, a senior Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operative, **who was involved in the abduction of Gilad Shalit.**

## Anti-tank missile fired at school bus

3. On Thursday, April 7, **Hamas fired a laser-guided Kornet anti-tank missile at a school bus in the western Negev.** A few minutes before the attack dozens of children got off the bus, leaving only the driver and a 16 year-old boy. Both were wounded. The boy was critically wounded by shrapnel which hit every part of his body, and the driver suffered minor injuries. The missile left a hole in the rear section of the bus and shatters its windows.

4. Rockets and mortar shells are launched at Israeli population centers but for technical reasons cannot hit specific targets. **However, this time the missile, an advanced laser-guided anti-tank missile, was fired at an indisputably civilian target, viz., a school bus which, like other school buses around the world, was painted yellow.**



The school bus attacked with an anti-tank missile (Photo by Adi Israel, courtesy of NRG)

5. Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack on the school bus (Al-Qassam website, April 7, 2011). In our assessment the attack on a civilian target was deliberate, despite the fact that Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri claimed that the Hamas operatives did not mean to strike a school bus because, he claimed, it is not Hamas policy to attack Israeli civilians<sup>2</sup> (Reuters, April 9, 2011).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Ezzedeem Al-Qassam Brigades  
Military Wing of Hamas Movement  
Information Office

كتائب الشهيد عز الدين القسام  
الجناح العسكري لحركة حماس  
المكتب الإعلامي

{أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى الصِّرَاطِ لَاقِدِيرٌ}

بيان عسكري صادر عن:  
... كتائب الشهيد عز الدين القسام ...

استهداف الحافلة الصهيونية شرق غزة هو أولى ردودنا على جرائم الاحتلال

تواصل كتائب القسام مسيرة جهادها المباركة، ونفي لشعبها بما عاهدته بعد الله تعالى عليه، بأن دماؤه وجراحاته وعذباته لا يمكن أن تذهب هدراً، واليوم تضرب كتائب القسام الخيل ليمسح دموع ذوي الشهداء، وتلبس اللواعة التي خلفتها وحشية الخيل الغادر في قلوب الأبرياء العزل، ولقد كانت رسالة القسام اليوم واضحة للصهيانية، بأننا لن نسمح لكم بعد اليوم بفرض معادلاتكم الخاصة على شعبنا، ولتعلموا أن كتائب القسام اليوم هي أقوى وأصلب مما كانت عليه بالأمس، وستكون في قابل الأيام أكثر ثباتاً وقوة، وستخطو بخطى وثق نحو تحرير فلسطين من يجرها إلى محرماً بإذن الله تعالى

وإننا في كتائب الشهيد عز الدين القسام نعلن بفضل الله تعالى وقوته وعمكيته مسئوليتنا الكاملة عن العملية البطولية التي نفذها مجاهدونا عصر اليوم الخميس 03 جمادى الأولى 1432 هـ الموافق 2011/04/07م، حيث استهدفوا في تمام الساعة 15:05 حافلة للاحتلال قرب مكنصة "كفار سعد" الصهيونية شرق غزة، مما أدى إلى إصابتها بشكل مباشر، وقد اعترف الاحتلال بإصابة اثنين من الصحابة جراء الاستهداف جراح أحدهم بالغة الخطورة . وتأتي هذه العملية البطولية رداً على جرائم الاحتلال المواصله والمكررة، وتغوله المتزايد على أبناء شعبنا في القدس والضفة والقطاع، والتي كان آخرها اغتيال القادة القساميين إسماعيل وعبد الله ليد ومحمد الداية، وإن كتائب القسام إذ نعلن مسئوليتها عن هذه العملية الجهادية لتؤكد بانها رد أولى على جرائم الاحتلال وأن مزيداً من الردود قادمة بإذن الله تعالى، وإن كتائبنا المجاهدة ستبقى رأس الخربة في مقاومة الاحتلال وسترد له الصاع صاعين في حال إقدامه على أي حماقات جديدة

والله أكبر والله الحمد  
وإنه جهاد نصر أو استشهاد،،  
كتائب الشهيد عز الدين القسام - فلسطين  
الخميس 03 جمادى الأولى 1432 هـ  
الموافق 2011/04/07م

Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades claims responsibility for firing the anti-tank missile at the school bus, referred to as an "occupation bus" (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, April 7, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> His remarks are a direct contradiction of Hamas rocket firing policy which **deliberately targets civilian population centers in Israel**. The suicide bombing attacks carried out by Hamas also generally targeted the civilian population.

## Rocket and mortar shell fire

6. The missile attack on the school bus was **accompanied by massive rocket and mortar shell fire** into Israeli territory. **The attacks on the Israeli south continued over the weekend.** Several were long-range rockets which hit north of the southern city of Ashdod. Several villages sustained damage to property and civilians were treated for shock. **Between April 7 and 10 a total of 58 rocket and 67 mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory** (similar to the daily numbers during Operation Cast Lead), as follows:

1) **April 7** – Eight hits and 18 mortar shell hits were identified. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted a rocket fired at the city of Ashqelon.

2) **April 8** – Nineteen rocket hits and 18 mortar shell hits were identified. One of the rockets hit a chicken coop, causing heavy damage. The Iron Dome intercepted three rockets aimed at the city of Ashqelon.



Damage to chicken coop in village near the Gaza Strip (Photo by Yehuda Lahiani, courtesy of NRG, April 9, 2011).

3) **April 9** – Twenty-six rocket hits (eight of which were 122 mm long-range Grad rockets) and 17 mortar shell hits were identified. Several buildings in various villages were damaged. The Iron Dome intercepted three rockets aimed at the city of Ashqelon.



Aerial photos documenting the terrorist rocket launching squad operating from within a cemetery (IDF Spokesman, April 9, 2011).

4) **April 10** – After a quiet night, five rockets fell during the morning. One of them fell in an open area south of Ashqelon. Two mortar shell hits were identified in the western Negev, one of which hit a power line, disrupting the delivery of electricity.

7. **The Israeli Iron Dome aerial defense system deployed in southern Israel during the past month intercepted eight rockets fired into Israeli territory** (IDF Spokesman, April 9, 2011).

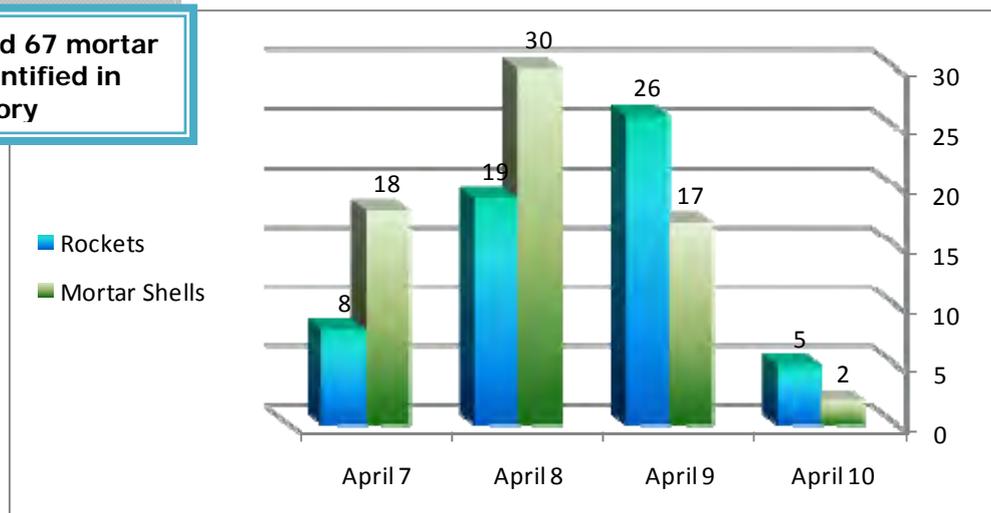


Grad missile intercepted in Ashqelon region by the Iron Dome  
(Photo by Adi Israel, courtesy of NRG, April 10, 2011).

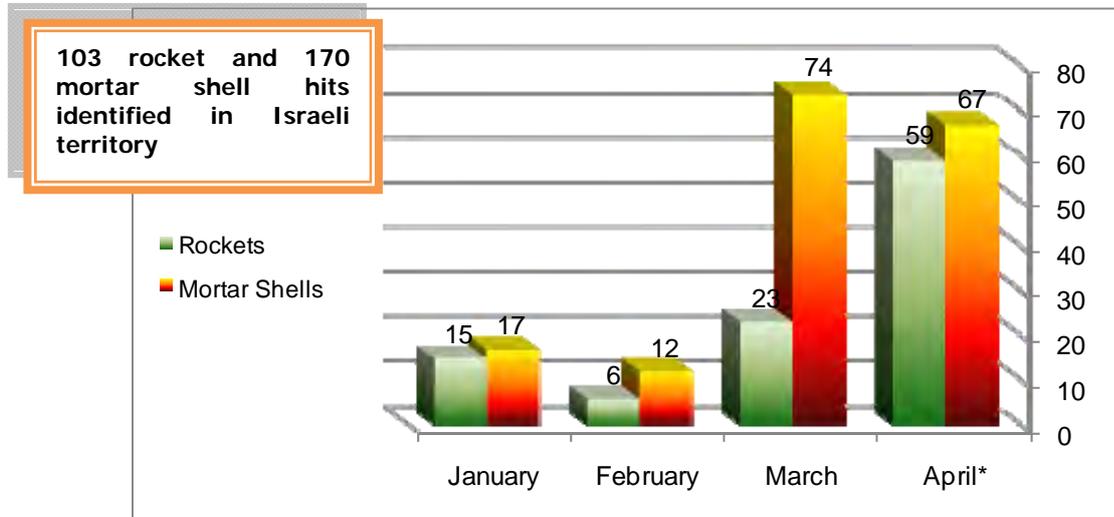
## Statistics of the recent escalation

### Daily rocket and mortar shell fire

58 rocket and 67 mortar shell hits identified in Israeli territory



## Rocket and mortar shell fire, 2011



\* As of April 10, 2011

## IDF response

8. Following the attack on the school bus **IDF aircraft, armored forces and infantry carried out intensive attacks in the Gaza Strip** (IDF Spokesman, April 9, 2011):

1) Israeli aircraft and armored forces **attacked 11 squads of terrorist operatives** in the northern and southern Gaza Strip on their way to fire rockets and mortar shells into Israeli territory.

2) Israeli aircraft attacked **15 terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip**, including posts, tunnels used to smuggle weapons, and sites for producing and stockpiling weapons.

3) In joint Israeli Air Force-Israel Security Agency operations, Israeli aircraft attacked Hamas command posts and terrorist operatives. **One of the attacks killed Taysir Sayid Suleiman Abu Sneimah, a senior operative in Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.** He was involved in many attacks against IDF forces and Israeli civilians, including a **rocket attack against the southern city of Eilat, and in the abduction of Gilad Shalit.**

9. The Palestinian media reported 17 dead and 50 wounded. Among those killed were terrorist operatives, including senior terrorist operatives, and several civilians who were killed inadvertently.

## Public reactions of the terrorist organizations

### Overview

10.  **Hamas publicly claimed responsibility for the rocket attacks** (an exceptional occurrence since Operation Cast Lead) **and for the mortar shell attacks on what it called "military posts"**<sup>3</sup> (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, April 8, 2011). Most of the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip also claimed responsibility for the attacks, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Resistance Committees, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations publicly denounced Israel's responses without any mention of the anti-tank missile attack on the school bus prior to the IDF retaliation.

11. A website affiliated with Fatah reported that **the Hamas leadership had lost control of the movement's military wing, commanded by Ahmed Jaabari**. According to the site, while the political wing of Hamas attempted to bring about a lull in the fighting, Jaabari ignored all their decisions and promoted a process of escalation (Al-Kawfiya Press, April 9, 2011). **Hamas spokesmen, on the other hand, stated publicly that the movement was not interested in an escalation and that an Israeli lull would be met with a Hamas lull.**

### Hamas

12. Senior Hamas figures said the following:

1) **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de facto Hamas administration, denounced Israel's "overt aggression," which, he said, harmed children, women, the elderly and medical teams (Hamas' Palestine-info website, April 8, 2011).

2) **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a senior Hamas figure, said that Hamas had consulted with the Egyptians and declared that **if Israel stopped its attacks the [terrorist] organizations in the Gaza Strip would promise to stop firing rockets**. He claimed that Hamas never tried to attack Israel from the Sinai Peninsula (BBC in Arabic, April 8, 2011).

3) **Salah al-Bardawil**, senior Hamas figure, said that the recent meetings of the [terrorist] organizations in the Gaza Strip had contributed to their adopting a unified

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<sup>3</sup> Hamas does not admit that its rockets and mortar shells are deliberately aimed at civilian population centers, and calls civilian targets "military posts."

position. He said that the "resistance" [i.e., the terrorist organizations] would decide when and where to respond (Al-Quds TV, April 8, 2011).

4) **Taher al-Nunu**, Hamas de facto administration spokesman, said that the Hamas administration strongly denounced the Israeli action and that **Hamas would use any and all means to stop the escalation**, including trying Israeli in international courts (Al-Aqsa TV, April 8, 2011).

5) **Ihab al-Ghusein**, spokesman for the interior ministry of the Hamas administration, denounced what he called the "Israeli escalation" and the silence of the international community, accusing Israel of "war crimes" (Al-Aqsa TV, April 8, 2011).

6) **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, called on the residents of Judea and Samaria to show solidarity with the residents of the Gaza Strip and **asked for the outbreak of a third intifada**. He also called for the demonstrators in Egypt to continue their protests in front of the Israeli embassy (Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, April 9, 2011).

13. **The de facto Hamas administration called for a meeting of the Arab League Council to discuss the escalation and "end the [Israeli] aggression."** It also called on the residents of the Gaza Strip to stand firm in face of the attacks (website of the Hamas administration interior ministry, April 8, 2011). **Muhammad Awad**, de facto Hamas administration foreign minister, noted that his ministry was trying to stop what he called "the continuing Israeli aggression." To that end, he said, **the ministry was in contact with the foreign ministries of Egypt and other Arab countries**, as well as with the international community, **to have them exert pressure on Israel** (Ma'an News Agency, April 8, 2011).

## The Palestinian Authority

14. Senior Palestinian Authority spokesmen denounced Israel and called for the escalation to end. As far as we know, they made no mention of the missile attack on the school bus which preceded the current escalation.

15. **Mahmoud Abbas**, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, who is currently in Egypt, met with ambassadors from Arab states and the Arab League to update them on the situation. He said that Israel was exploiting the current situation in the Arab countries to attack the Gaza Strip, stressing that Israel's activities were "international crimes" against the Palestinian people (Wafa News Agency, April 8, 2011).

16. **Saeb Erekat**, member of the PLO's executive committee, denounced the "dangerous Israeli aggression" and Israel's "criminal actions." He said that in accordance with a request from Mahmoud Abbas, the Arab League Council would hold an extraordinary meeting to

discuss the events. He said that action had to be taken to prevent the situation from deteriorating further (Wafa News Agency, April 10, 2011).

## International reactions

### The United States

17. **On April 7 Mark C. Toner, acting deputy department spokesman said that "We condemn the attack on innocent civilians in southern Israel in the strongest possible terms, as well as ongoing rocket fire from Gaza.** As we have reiterated many times, there's no justification for the targeting of innocent civilians, and those responsible for these terrorist acts should be held accountable. We are particularly concerned about reports that indicate the use of an advanced anti-tank weapon in an attack against civilians and reiterate that all countries have obligations under relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition."<sup>4</sup>

### The UN

18. **Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the recent rocket fire from Palestinian militants, which hit a school bus and injured two Israeli civilians, and called for an immediate end to rocket fire.** He urged respect for international humanitarian law and calls for de-escalation and calm to prevent any further bloodshed.<sup>5</sup>

### The European Union

19. **Catherine Ashton, foreign minister of the European Union, said "I strongly condemn yesterday's mortar and rocket attacks out of the Gaza strip...which must stop immediately.** I am deeply concerned by the current escalation of violence... The lives of civilians must be spared everywhere and in all circumstances. Only an immediate cessation of all violence can bring back the calm necessary to allow for a lasting truce in the Gaza strip."<sup>6</sup>

### Britain

20. **British foreign minister William Hague denounced the deliberate attack on the school bus.** He said, "I reiterate that Hamas must halt these strikes immediately, and rein in other militant factions in Gaza. This attack further highlights Israel's legitimate security concerns. As I have made clear, Israel has every right to protect its people."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2011/04/160298.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38049&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/121394.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/121394.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=581264682>

## France

21. **A spokesman for the French foreign ministry strongly denounced the anti-tank missile attack on the school bus** which, he said, led to the latest escalation. He called for an immediate stop to the violence which, he said, would have humanitarian consequences (French foreign ministry website, April 8, 2011).

## Egypt

22. **Nabil al-Arabi**, the Egyptian foreign minister, expressed Egypt's concern over what he called "Israel's escalation" in the Gaza Strip. He added that Egypt denounced the Israeli attacks from the air and its artillery fire on the Gaza Strip, and said he hoped both sides would adhere to the lull to protect the security and lives of civilians. He said Egypt was holding talks with both sides concerning the issue (Misrawi website and Hamas' Palestine-info website, April 8, 2011).

23. On April 8-9, the escalation in the Gaza Strip led thousands to demonstrate in front of the Israeli embassy in Cairo. They called for the ambassador to be sent home and for an end to the normalization with Israel.

24. **Mohammed Mursi, Muslim Brotherhood spokesman in Egypt**, strongly denounced the IDF attacks and called on the Arab countries not only to condemn Israel, but **to support the "Palestinian resistance"** [i.e., terrorist organizations] **with weapons and ammunition so that they would be able to resist "Israeli aggression"** (Muslim Brotherhood website, April 7, 2011).

# Appendix

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## The Kornet missile

1. Since the end of Operation Cast Lead Hamas has made great efforts to rebuild and upgrade its anti-tank missile network, which it considers a response to the superiority of Israel's armored vehicles. During the past two years the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip have equipped themselves with advanced guided missile systems with significant penetrating power, **such as the Kornet missile**.

2. Kornet missiles, like other advanced weapons, are **smuggled into the Gaza Strip with the aid and support of Syria and Iran**. Kornets are also transported to Hezbollah, which fired them during the Second Lebanon War.<sup>8</sup>

3. **The first time a Kornet missile was used by a terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip was on December 6, 2010**. It was used to attack an IDF tank. On April 7 another Kornet missile was fired, this time **attacking a civilian target** (a school bus).

## The Kornet anti-tank missile (AT-14 Spriggan)

4. The Kornet is an advanced laser-guided anti-tank missile manufactured by Russia. It is intended to deal with armored vehicles. Its warhead can penetrate a reactive shield.

5. Technical specifications:

- ✓ **Weight:** 27 kilograms (59.5 pounds)
- ✓ **Length:** 1,200 millimeters (47 inches)
- ✓ **Diameter:** 152 millimeters (6 inches)
- ✓ **Range:** 100 – 5,500 meters (109 yards – 3.4 miles)



Kornet

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<sup>8</sup> In the south Lebanon village of Ghandouriya eight Kornet missiles were found along with their launchers. The missiles were made in Russian and transported to Hezbollah from Syria.