



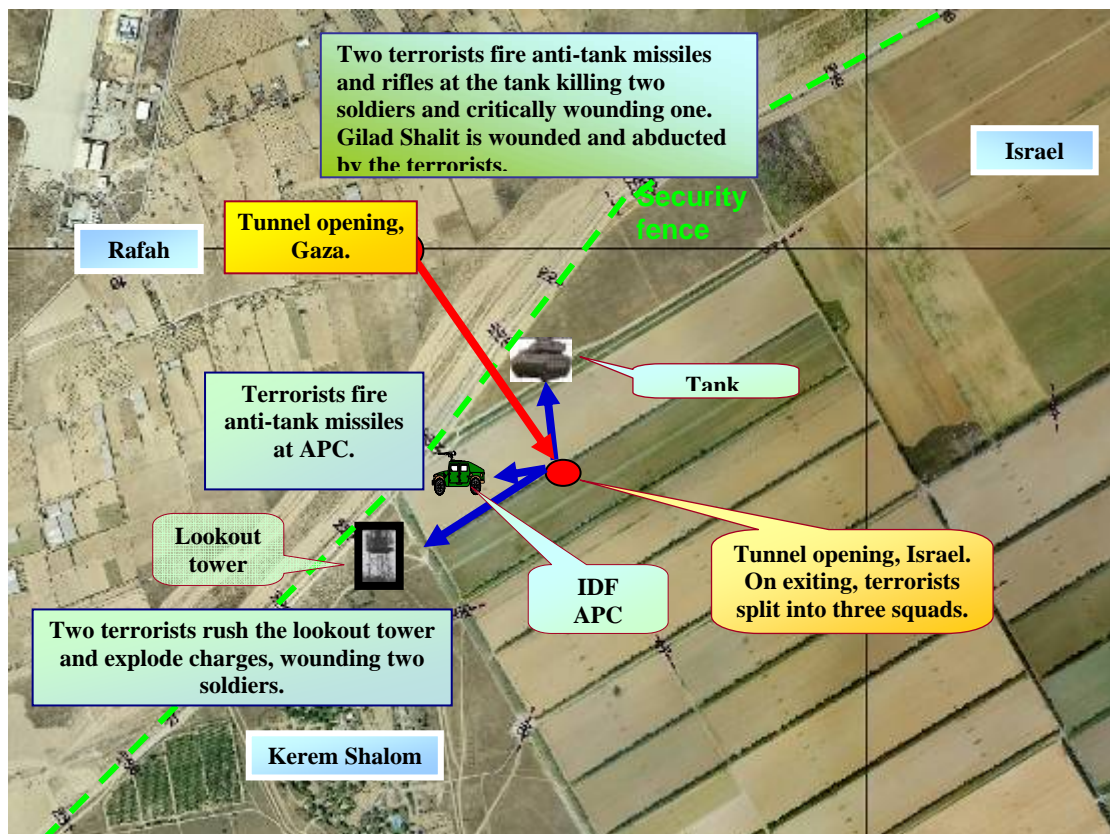
June 27, 2006

Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

IDF force attacked and soldier abducted near Kibbutz Kerem Shalom (updated June 26)

Description of the attack

✦ At about 5:30 a.m. on Sunday morning, June 25, a group of seven Hamas and Popular Resistance Committees (PRC)¹ terrorists attacked an IDF force close to Kibbutz Kerem Shalom. During the attack an Israeli soldier was abducted and removed to the Gaza Strip.



Aerial photo of the site and the stages of the attack

¹ Another (hitherto unknown) group calling itself the Army of Islam also claimed responsibility for participation in the attack. They may be headed by Mumtaz Doghmoush, who left the PRC.

✦ A group of terrorists reached Israeli territory behind IDF lines by digging a tunnel 700-800 meters long (between 4/10 and almost 1/2 a mile) from the outskirts of Rafah approximately 300 meters (almost 2/10 of a mile) into Israeli territory. With covering mortar and anti-tank missile fire, the group split into three squads. The squads attacked simultaneously, firing anti-tank missiles, setting off charges and throwing grenades at a tank, an empty armored personnel carrier and a lookout tower. One of the squads hit the tank (which was manned) with anti-tank missiles.



The tank hit in the attack

✦ The group blew a hole in the fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip and retreated, taking with them a wounded IDF soldier, one of the tank crew. Two IDF soldiers were killed and a third was wounded, all of whom had been in the tank at the time of the attack. Two soldiers manning the lookout tower were also wounded. During the exchange of fire, at least two terrorists were shot and killed. Afterwards, charges were exploded attacking the IDF soldiers searching the area, slightly injuring three of them.



**Staff Sergeant Pavel Slutzker, 20,
from Dimona.
Survived by his parents and brother.**



**Lieutenant Hanan Barak, 20,
from Arad.
Survived by his parents, sister and
brother.**

(Photos courtesy of the IDF Spokesman)



Left: IDF forces during the attack (Al-Jazeera TV, June 25); right: The site of the attack seen from the Palestinian side (Palestinian Islamic Jihad Website, June 25).

Claiming responsibility

✦ The PRC, an organization directed by Hamas, announced that the attack had been carried out by joint PRC-Hamas-Army of Islam forces in retaliation for the deaths of two senior PRC terrorists, Jamal Abu Samhadana² and Abu Yusuf Qoqa,³ and for the deaths of the members of the Ghalia family.⁴ (In our assessment, it would take a number of months to dig a tunnel that long and therefore it is **not plausible** that the attack was related to the events which took place during the past month.)

✦ The three organizations which took responsibility for the attack issued an announcement demanding the release of all female and underage security prisoners held by Israel. In return, Israel would receive information about the fate of the abducted soldier (Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades Website, June 26). Note: According to Haaretz, June 27, there are 313 underage prisoners in Israeli prisons, of whom 91 have blood on their hands, and 109 women, of whom 64 have blood on their hands.

² For further information about Samhadana's death, see our Information Bulletin entitled "Jamal Abu Samhadana was killed in an air strike on a Popular Resistance Committees training base in the Gaza Strip.," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/english/pdf/samhadana_e.pdf.

³ A senior PRC terrorist-operative in the northern Gaza Strip who was killed when a car bomb exploded in April 2006.

⁴ They members of the Ghalia family were killed in an explosion on the Gaza beach. An IDF enquiry commission categorically rejected the possibility that the family had been killed by IDF fire.



**The abducted soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit
(Photo courtesy of the IDF spokesman)**

✦ A spokesman for the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’s terrorist-operative wing, boasted about the attack, describing it as “a high quality attack,” the first of its kind, fruit of **long-term preparations** (<http://www.palmedia.ps>, June 25). Hamas Websites featured posters glorifying the attack and **Omayya Joha**, a popular cartoonist who identifies with Hamas, represented it as the war between David and Goliath.



**Izzedine al-Qassam Battalions spokesman praising the attack
(Al-Jazeera TV, June 25).**



Calling the attack “the vanishing [Israeli] illusion,” a poster which appeared on the Hamas Website immediately afterwards.



An Omayya Joha cartoon which appeared on the Hamas Website immediately after the attack: The tiny explosive belt-wearing Palestinian smashes the giant Israeli...

The Political-Security Cabinet's decisions

✦ On the afternoon of June 25 the Political-Security Cabinet was convened in Tel Aviv and made the following decisions:

- ✓ **Israel views the terrorist incident that occurred today with utmost severity. The Palestinian Authority (PA) – the PA Chairman [i.e., Abu Mazen] and the PA government [i.e., the Hamas government] – is responsible for the event with everything that implies.**
- ✓ **Israel will take all necessary actions to bring about the release of abducted soldier Corporal Gilad Shalit.**⁵ This objective has **top priority** and, to this end, the Cabinet approves all the preparations that were presented to it by the security establishment.
- ✓ **The PA will bear full responsibility** for any harm to Corporal Shalit. No person or organization will have immunity at this time.
- ✓ The Cabinet approves the security establishment's recommendations **to prepare and deploy the forces necessary in preparation for urgent military action** as obligated by the PA's actions and intentions.
- ✓ **Contacts will continue with the international community** to maintain international pressure on the PA leadership with the objective of bringing about Corporal Shalit's release.

Political actions taken to effect the release of the abducted soldier.

✦ Meeting with 60 foreign ambassadors and representatives, Israeli Foreign Minister Tsipi Livne called upon them to exert pressure on the PA to effect the release of the abducted soldier. She stated that “the coming hours are critical.” Israeli President Katsav met with the Vatican Ambassador to Israel and asked for the Holy See's help in locating the missing soldier and ensuring his welfare (www.ynetnews.com, June 26).

⁵ IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz held a press conference at Kerem Shalom at which he announced that according to information known to the IDF, **the abducted soldier is still alive.**

✦ According to an article appearing in the Israeli daily Haaretz, Egypt is mediating to help Israel in an attempt to release the abducted soldier. The article stated that diplomats living in Gaza and dealing with mediating the affair told Haaretz that they had found the group holding him. They said that “Gilad’s abductors are treating him well. He is wounded but his condition is good...” (Amos Harel, Avi Issacharoff and Aluf Benn, Haaretz, June 26).

Palestinian reactions

✦ The **Palestinian terrorist organizations** in the Gaza Strip announced an alert. Fatah’s leadership called upon the Gaza Strip’s civilian population to prepare for a possible Israeli attack (Radio Shabbab, June 25). For security reasons, Abu Mazen instructed the Presidential Guard to leave the Rafah crossing, which had been closed as a result of the attack (Ramattan News Agency, June 25). **Gaza Strip residents** expressed their deep concern and fear of an action initiated by the IDF and of Israeli measures which are liable to harm them, such as closing the crossings, limiting the number of work permits issued, etc.

✦ **Abu Mazen, the PA chairman, condemned the attack and said Hamas would be responsible for its consequences,** and that **it impeded the progress achieved in discussions with Hamas in the national dialogue.** Currently in the Gaza Strip, Abu Mazen spoke with Ismail Haniya, Hamas prime minister, and **demande d he act to release the abducted soldier.** He expressed his concern that a broad Israeli land action in the Gaza Strip would strengthen Hamas and lessen his own chances of carrying the referendum (Ramattan News Agency Website, June 25).

✦ **Senior Hamas figures publicly supported** the attack and represented it as a legitimate response to Israel’s acts:

✓ **Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri** said that the attack was “the natural reaction” to Israel’s actions.

✓ **Hamas government spokesman Dr. Ghazi Hamad** called upon the Israeli government not to be drawn into escalation.⁶ He appealed to the **various terrorist organizations and asked them to keep the abducted soldier alive** (Al-Jazeera TV, June 25).



Dr. Ghazi Hamad appealing to the Israelis in Hebrew
(Al-Jazeera TV, June 25).

✓ **Palestinian Legislative Council Secretary Mahmoud al-Ramhi** said that the attack should not be condemned since it had targeted soldiers and not civilians, and that it was a **“natural and legitimate” reaction** to Israel’s acts. He said the attack was a clear statement **that Hamas would not abandon the path of “resistance”** [i.e., terrorism and violence], despite agreement on the prisoner’s document (Hamas Website, June 25).

Summary and evaluation

✦ With the attack on an IDF force and the abduction of a soldier, the escalation of the past few weeks in the Gaza Strip **reached a new height**. Until now, it has **been a function of the increase in the number of rocket attacks on Sderot and other population centers in the western Negev: between June 1 and 25, 128 hits were identified in Israel, a monthly record** since the disengagement of last August.⁷ **Hamas’s rejoining the attacking forces** contributed to stepping up the escalation,

⁶ Part of his statement was made in (fumbling) Hebrew with the aim of speaking directly to the Israeli public.

⁷ Since the disengagement there have been 640 identified rocket hits in Israel; in our assessment the overall number of rockets fired including those unidentified is between 20%-30% higher.

since it has better operational capabilities than the other organizations concerning **launching rockets** at western Negev population centers from the Gaza Strip

✦ Attacking and abducting the soldier was a complex operation, one which both called for daring and had to be very well planned. It was the first of its kind carried out by Hamas's terrorist-operative wing since the so-called "lull in the fighting" went into effect in March 2005. It was also the first abduction carried out by Hamas since the abduction and killing of Sasson Nuriel on September 21, 2005.⁸ It should be recalled that in **recent months**, senior Hamas figures, including the heads of the terrorist-operative wing among them, **repeatedly warned of their intention to abduct an Israeli as a hostage to release terrorist-operatives in Israeli prisons.**⁹

⁸ Sasson Nuriel's abduction was carried out by Hamas terrorist-operatives in the Ramallah district under the direction of the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip. Its purpose was to use him as a bargaining chip to effect the release of Palestinian terrorist prisoners. The plan went wrong and Sasson Nuriel was shot and killed shortly after his abduction.

⁹ For example, Ahmad Ibn Sayid al-Ja'abari, one of the heads of Hamas's terrorist-operative wing, said the following: "[The men of] al-Qassam...think day and night about abducting Zionists and exchanging them. It should be noted that since 1989 [the men of] al-Qassam have abducted 15 occupation soldiers and we are absolutely certain that Allah will permit [the men of] al-Qassam to complete this project because the prisoners will not be released by negotiations and good will" (from an interview with a local Hamas periodical in the northern Gaza Strip called Al-Thabat, according to the Hamas Website, April 5, 2006).