



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 (Update No. 1)

The attack near Kerem Shalom (additional information)

✦ On the morning of June 26, IDF forces blew up the tunnel used by the group of Palestinian terrorists to infiltrate into Israeli territory. The tunnel shaft was exposed in a Palestinian house 350 meters (about 380 yards) from the fence separating the Gaza Strip from Israel.



Blowing up the tunnel (Photo courtesy of the IDF spokesman)

✦ IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz ordered a staff of experts, headed by General (Ret.) Giora Eiland, to examine the circumstances of the attack and to prepare a report, including findings and conclusions, by July 10.

The situation on the ground

✦ Despite the tension after the attack, **Qassam rockets continued to be launched into Israeli territory**. During the past 24 hours, four rockets were fired at western Negev population centers. One fell on Sderot, slightly injuring four civilians (who were wounded by shrapnel), and 13 civilians were treated for shock. Another rocket hit a high voltage pylon, causing a power outage.



**One of the Qassam rocket victims being taken to the hospital
(Gil Cohen Magen for Reuters, June 26).**

✦ Following the attack, Israel announced **the immediate closing of the crossings** between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The coordination center at Kerem Shalom was also closed, which in effect meant **closing the Rafah crossing**, where Abu Mazen ordered the removal of the Presidential Guard. In our assessment, that was done to **exert pressure on the abductors and to prevent the soldier from being removed from the Gaza Strip, overland or by sea.**

✦ In a speech before the Israeli Hotel Association, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he had instructed the IDF to deploy forces “so that they are ready for comprehensive and ongoing military action, in order to strike at the terror organizations, their commanders and anyone involved in terror....” (Prime Minister’s Office Website, June 27).¹ **Operatives of Hamas** and other Palestinian terrorist

¹ <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechhote260606.htm>.

organizations continue preparing the region for the possible entrance of IDF forces into the Gaza Strip.



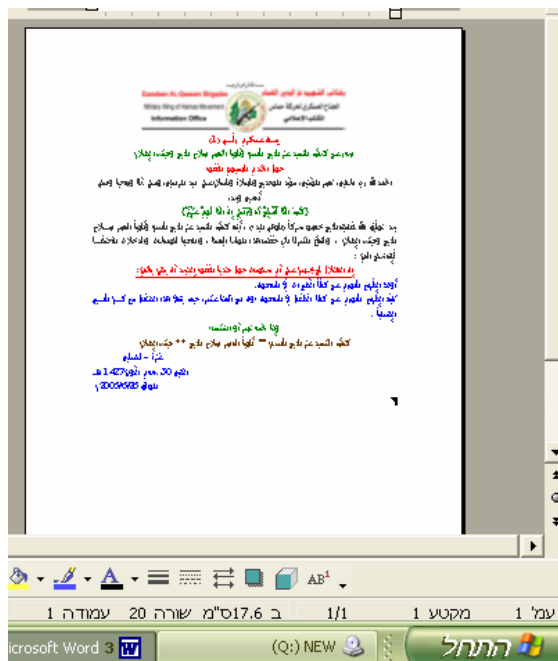
IDF forces concentrated at the edge of the Gaza Strip (Al-Jazeera TV, June 26).

The issue of the abducted soldier

✦ Hamas, the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) and the Army of Islam issued a joint announcement **demanding Israel release all the female and minor Palestinian security prisoners** currently held in Israeli jails. In return, Israel would receive **information** about 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. They are all terrorists who were involved in suicide bombing attacks and murders.)



The Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades spokesman announces the abductors' demands and warns the Zionists "not to do anything stupid" (Al-Manar TV, June 26).



The flyer distributed in the Gaza Strip detailing the abductors' demands (Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades Website, June 26)

✦ Speaking before the Trustees of the Jewish Agency on June 26, the Israeli Prime Minister responded by saying that **“The question of release of prisoners is not at all on the agenda of the Government of Israel... We will respond against any terrorist, against any terror organization, wherever they are...they know that we know how to reach them even in distant places, even when they think they are hiding, even when they believe they are safe... The time for comprehensive, harsh and severe action by the State of Israel gets shorter and shorter...We will not become the subject of terrorist coercion by Hamas...”** (Prime Minister’s Office Website, June 26).²

✦ **Regarding the fate of the abducted soldier:**

✓ In a telephone conversation with an Agence France-Presse reporter, an unidentified PRC spokesman said that **“the abducted soldier is alive, his health is good and he is not suffering from serious wounds.”** He added that the soldier **“eats and drinks and is well-treated”** (AFP, June 26).

✓ Brigadier General Yossi Baidatz, head of Israeli Military Research Division, said that **“senior members of Hamas’s military wing are holding the abducted soldier Gilad Shalit. He is alive and slightly injured”** (Haaretz,

² <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechsoch260606.htm>.

June 27). He noted that the Palestinian terrorist group's first plan was to abduct an IDF soldier, take him to the Gaza Strip, present him at a press conference and to demand the release of Palestinian prisoners. However, he added, they have dropped the plan because of the severe pressure exerted on them (Gideon Alon in Haaretz, June 27).

✓ **Senior Hamas operatives called upon the soldier's abductors to keep him alive**, including 'Aziz al-Dweik, chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the general secretary of the government (Ma'an News Agency, June 26). Deputy prime minister Nasser al-Din al-Shaar also called upon the abductors "to keep the soldier alive, to behave nicely to him and not to hurt him or give [Israel] an excuse to damage the Gaza Strip... (Ramattan News Agency, June 26).

✦ At a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, the head of Israeli Military Research Division also said that there was apparently a disagreement between **Khaled Mashal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, and **Ismail Haniya**, prime minister of the Hamas government, concerning what to do with the abducted soldier: One approach supported his quick release, so as not to complicate matters with Israel, which was threatening to initiate a comprehensive military action; the other supported keeping him prisoner and holding negotiations to release him in return for the release of Palestinian terrorists (Haaretz, June 27).

The attack at Kerem Shalom was directed by the Hamas leadership in Damascus

✦ On June 27 a "high-placed source" in Israeli Military Intelligence told a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Ismail Haniya's ability to maneuver in the affair of the abducted soldier was limited, because "**Khaled Mashal [chairman of the political bureau] makes the important decisions in Damascus.**" He said that the connection between Khaled Mashal and the abductors was implemented through Ahmad Ja'abari, head of the Hamas terrorist-operative wing in the Gaza Strip, who was considered responsible for the abduction (www.ynetnews.com, June 27).

✦ Elements within Fatah in the West Bank told a Jerusalem Post reporter that the attack on the IDF force at Kerem Shalom was carried out after **instructions had been received from the Hamas leadership in Syria**. They said that the purpose of the attack was to sabotage all Fatah and Hamas attempts to reach an agreement on the prisoners document and to embarrass Abu Mazen and Ismail Haniya (Jerusalem Post, June 25).

Praise for the attack in the Syrian and Egyptian media

Syria

✦ The Palestinian broadcasts on Radio Damascus **praised** the attack at Kerem Shalom, representing it as the “natural reaction” to “Israeli violence.” They noted that the attack would not be the last of its kind (Agence France-Presse, June 25).

Egypt

✦ On June 25 the official Egyptian media also praised the attack at Kerem Shalom. **Al-Gumhuriya** called it “a heroic action,” representing it as “self defense.” **Al-Ahram** blamed Israel for the attack, representing it as “legitimate” and calling for both sides to show restraint and to return to the negotiating table.