



Hamas Summer Camps Continue Training the Younger Gazan Generation for the Armed Struggle against Israel

August 10, 2017



Gazan youth simulate infiltrating Israel through a tunnel, capturing an IDF soldier and abducting him to the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Rafah24, July 26, 2017).

Overview

► This year, as in previous years, summer camps were held throughout the Gaza Strip, attended by **tens of thousands of Gazan children and adolescents**. Most of the camps were organized by Hamas, some by other terrorist organizations and institutions.¹ The camps provide a wide range of activities, from ordinary summer pastimes (sports, arts and crafts, computers, day trips, etc.) to **military training and ideological indoctrination**. Hamas attributes great importance to the summer camps, considering them an effective means **for influencing the younger generation and training a cadre of operatives and supporters for its military wing and movement institutions**.

¹Such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), charity associations, women's associations, Islamic associations and UNRWA.

An examination of some of the closing ceremonies of the 2017 summer camps shows **they emphasized military topics** coordinated to the age of the participants. The older the campers were, **the more and varied military training they received**. The adolescents, some of them who would join Hamas military wing in the near future, wore uniforms and learned how to dismantle and reassemble weapons. **They also practiced simulating infiltrating Israel through tunnels, attacking IDF posts, taking control of tank positions, and capturing IDF soldiers and abducting them to the Gaza Strip. They trained with real weapons**, mostly light arms and RPG launchers.

► **The various military tactics taught and the activities practiced were similar to the training Hamas has given its military and security forces since Operation Protective Edge.** That may indicate that Hamas intends to use tactics such as infiltrating Israel through tunnels, taking over IDF posts and abducting IDF soldiers more extensively during the next confrontation with Israel.²

Hamas Summer Camps, 2017

► On July 8, 2017, **senior Hamas figure Usama al-Mazini** held a press conference in Gaza City where he announced the opening of Hamas' summer camps. This year the theme was "[We are] Going to Jerusalem," to show that Hamas' "compass is directed towards Jerusalem," and that Jerusalem is the heart of the struggle against Israel. According to al-Mazini Hamas devotes much of its education for the younger generation to fostering love of the homeland. Opening the summer camps on the third anniversary of Operation Protective Edge was meant to emphasize **that Hamas continued preparing and strengthening the younger generation to train them for the next confrontation with Israel.**

► According to al-Mazini, **the summer camps would be held in several cycles for about a month. They would be attended by 120,000 children and adolescents of all ages (50,000 boys and 70,000 girls)**, from every district of the Gaza Strip. He said the camps' activities would be both entertaining and educational. Campers would learn about science and art and would practice Qur'an memorization (Sawt al-Aqsa Radio website, al-Quds website, and

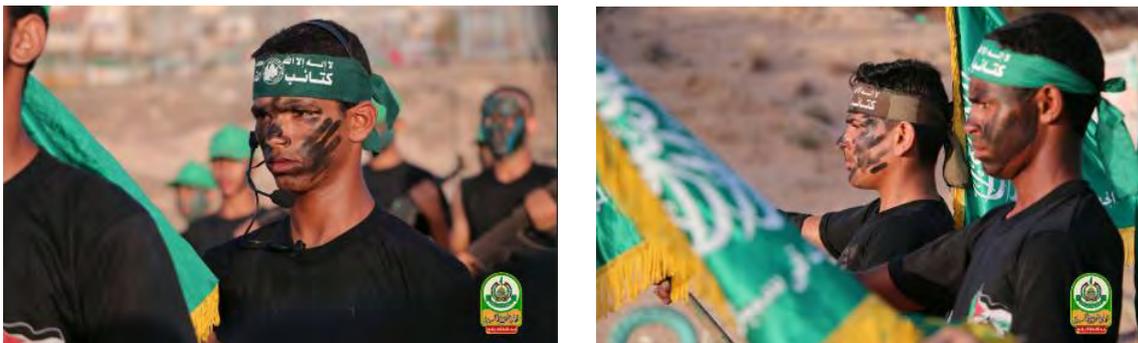
² For further examples of Hamas training activities, see the February 3, 2015 bulletin, "Hamas and the other terrorist organizations based in Gaza are rehabilitating the military capabilities damaged in Operation Protective Edge through extensive recruitment, the establishment of military units and intensive military training," and the September 10, 2015 bulletin, "Two military exercises carried out by the national security forces under Hamas direction in the Gaza Strip simulated storming an IDF post and capturing soldiers."

Filastin Online, July 8, 2017). On July 9, 2017 a similar ceremony was held at the Shati refugee camp, where the opening of the summer camps was announced at a press conference held in front of the home of Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau (siraj lil-i'lam, July 9, 2017).



Left: Isma'il Haniyeh, head of the Hamas' political bureau, attends the opening of the summer camps in the western part of Gaza City (siraj lil-i'lam, July 9, 2017). Right: Usama al-Mazini announces the opening of the summer camps (Filastin Online, July 8, 2017).

► Summer camps in the Gaza Strip are sponsored by **Hamas' unit of public activity**, which is responsible for the movement's popular activities. It organizes protest demonstrations and marches, conferences and events for special occasions. The unit is headed by **Ashraf Abu Ziyad**. Apparently, in organizing the camps, **Hamas' military wing and security forces are also involved in everything related to military instruction and training**. However, this year (unlike previous summers) Hamas apparently did its best to obscure the link between its military forces and the camps, including blurring the faces of the operatives who instructed the campers. However, an examination of the displays held at closing ceremonies and the military equipment used indicates that the campers were given **professional military guidance** by Hamas' military and security forces. **Many campers wore uniforms and the green headbands of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades.**



**Campers wearing green Hamas military wing headbands
(Facebook page of Rafah24, July 26, 2017).**

► For example:

- ◆ At the "Knights of Palestine" camp held in the western part of Rafah the closing ceremony was attended by 150 campers. **They put on a display of simulating the infiltration of an IDF post through a tunnel, capturing an IDF soldier and abducting him into the tunnel.** They used **real weapons** and a soundtrack of explosions was played in the background (Facebook page of Rafah24, July 29 and 30, 2017). Other pictures show campers undergoing weapons training, including the use of RPG launchers (Facebook page of Rafah24, July 26, 2017).
- ◆ At the closing ceremony of a different camp in Rafah, which was attended by **senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad**, campers simulated **exiting a tunnel, taking control of an IDF tank, capturing an IDF soldier and abducting him into the tunnel.** They also simulated **attaching an explosive device to an IDF tank and "blowing it up"** (Facebook page of Rafah24, August 6, 2017).



Left: Pictures of senior Hamas military wing operatives from Rafah, killed in Operation Protective Edge. Right: Senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad gives a speech at the closing ceremony, surrounded by campers holding Kalashnikovs (Facebook page of Rafah24, August 6, 2017).



Al-Aqsa mosque was also featured at the closing ceremony (Facebook page of Rafah24, August 6, 2017).

Display of Training Exercises at the Closing Ceremonies

Exiting an Attack Tunnel



A "scout" exits a tunnel.





Campers simulate taking control of an IDF post, throw the Israeli flag to the ground and replace it with a Hamas flag.

Capturing an IDF Soldier and Abducting Him to the Gaza Strip



Attacking an IDF Tank and Attaching an Explosive Device to It



Firing RPGs



Dismantling and Reassembling Light Arms, and Shooting Practice



Dismantling and Reassembling Weapons

