



# Hamas's use of anti-tank Kornet missiles supplied by Iran and Hezbollah

November 14, 2018



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## Overview

On November 12, 2018, Hamas launched an anti-tank Kornet missile from the Gaza Strip at a bus carrying soldiers near the border with the Gaza Strip (south of the city of Sderot). An IDF soldier was severely wounded. A few minutes before the missile was launched, dozens of soldiers got off the bus to receive a briefing nearby. **Launching the missile was the “opening shot” of a massive rocket attack initiated by Hamas**, targeting cities and communities in the western Negev, with other terrorist organizations joining as well.



The bus on fire after being hit by a Kornet missile fired by Hamas (Twitter account of the Hamas military wing, November 12, 2018)

► **Kornet is a Russian-made laser-guided advanced anti-tank weapon system. Iran supplied it to Hezbollah**, which skillfully employed Kornet missiles against IDF soldiers during the Second Lebanon War (2006). After the war (around 2009), **Iran and probably also Hezbollah supplied this weapon to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, in an attempt to repeat their success in Lebanon** (Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah publicly admitted that he had supplied Kornet missiles to the Gaza Strip). The provision of Kornet

missiles to the Hamas (and other terrorist organizations) was carried out to equip them with a response to the advantage of the IDF armored vehicles, demonstrated in operations carried out in the Gaza Strip.

► Hamas and the other terrorist organizations used Kornet missiles against IDF armored vehicles in Operation Protective Edge and Operation Pillar of Defense. In addition, **anti-tank missiles were fired at military and civilian vehicles** moving near the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip:

◆ **On April 7, 2011**, Hamas launched a Kornet missile **at a school bus** near Sa'ad junction (south of Sderot). A few minutes before the launch, dozens of students got off the bus. The driver and a 16-year old boy remained on the bus. The boy was killed and the driver was slightly wounded. **The launch triggered escalation in the south of Israel**. During the escalation, about 120 rockets and mortar shells were fired at Israel, hitting the cities of Beersheba, Ashdod and Ashkelon and other communities. The IDF responded by an extensive attack on terrorist targets.

◆ **On November 10, 2012**, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) launched a Kornet missile at an IDF jeep engaged in routine security activity. Four IDF soldiers were wounded, one of them severely. The attack triggered escalation which lasted for several days. The escalation led to the killing of Ahmad al-Jaabari, acting commander of Hamas's military wing, **and to Operation Pillar of Defense** (starting on November 14, 2012).

### **Kornet missile launched at bus near the Gaza Strip border fence**

► On November 12, 2018, in the afternoon, **Hamas fired a Kornet missile from the Gaza Strip at a bus** near the border fence, south of Sderot. The bus went up in flames and a soldier guarding it was severely wounded. **The launch was carried out a few minutes after dozens of soldiers got off the bus** to receive a briefing nearby. **The missile launch was the “opening shot” of a Hamas-led massive rocket attack targeting the western Negev and lasting for 24 hours.**

► After firing the missile, **Hamas and the joint operations room of the Gaza Strip terrorist organizations released an announcement claiming responsibility**. According to the claim of responsibility, the launch was carried out in retaliation for a confrontation east of Khan Younes, in which seven terrorist operatives were killed. According to the announcement, the

bus went up in flames and all the passengers were killed or wounded (website of Hamas's military wing, November 12, 2018).



**Video disseminated by Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, showing the Kornet missile hitting the Israeli bus (PALINFO Twitter account, November 12, 2018)**

### The Kornet missile smuggled into the Gaza Strip by Iran

► **The Kornet missile (AT-14 Spriggan) is an advanced anti-tank laser-guided weapon system** manufactured by Russia. It is designated to hit armored vehicles. The missile is equipped with a warhead **capable of penetrating reactive armor**.<sup>1</sup> The missile's diameter is 152 mm, it weighs 27 kg, and its range is 100-5,500 meters.



**Kornet anti-tank missile system**

► **At first, Iran supplied the Kornet missiles to the Lebanese Hezbollah.** The missiles supplied by Iran to Hezbollah **were employed very skillfully by the organization, day and night, during the Second Lebanon War (2006).** The missiles hit dozens of IDF armored vehicles in South Lebanon. They were also fired at buildings where IDF soldiers were present, causing casualties. **Following the successful employment of these missiles in Lebanon,**

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<sup>1</sup>**Reactive armor** is a type of vehicle armor that reacts in some way to the impact of a weapon to reduce the damage done to the vehicle being protected. It is most effective in protecting against shaped charges such as rockets and antitank missiles (Wikipedia).

**Iran and probably also Hezbollah supplied Kornet missiles to Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip.**



**Launcher of anti-tank Kornet missiles, employed by Hezbollah in South Lebanon, at a firing position in the village of Ghandouriyah (ITIC publication, October 7, 2007).**

► Hamas and other terrorist organizations equipped themselves with advanced anti-tank weapon systems such as the Kornet missiles **as part of implementing the lessons from Operation Cast Lead** (December 27, 2008 – January 18, 2009). Hamas considered the Kornet missile a suitable response for the IDF’s superior armored vehicles. The Kornet missiles, like other advanced weapons, **were smuggled into the Gaza Strip with the assistance of Iran, as the latter was interested in equipping Hamas and the other terrorist organizations with advanced weapons**, and repeat the successful employment of the Kornet missile in Lebanon. **Iran smuggled the missiles and other advanced weapons by land, air and sea**, using cross-border networks of smugglers and traders. **The main route used for smuggling the weapons was from Iran to Sudan, and from there through Sinai into the Gaza Strip** (using the extensive tunnel network between Sinai and the Gaza Strip).<sup>2</sup>

### **Hezbollah leader publicly admits supplying Kornet missiles to Gaza**

► On November 20, 2017, Hezbollah leader **Hassan Nasrallah** delivered a speech in which he admitted that **his organization had supplied Kornet missiles to the Gaza Strip and he was proud of that**. Nasrallah said that with reference to a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Arab countries. He denied that his organization was sending weapons to Arab countries, except “occupied Palestine and Syria” (Planet website, November 20, 2017). Here is what Nasrallah said in his speech: **“We have the honor to take part in supplying Kornet missiles**

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<sup>2</sup> See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from January 7, 2013: “Iranian support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations.”

**to the Gaza Strip. Yes, I'm proud of that, and whoever wishes to denounce us, he is to be denounced"** (YouTube, November 13, 2018).



**Hassan Nasrallah announces in his speech (November 20, 2017) that his organization supplied Kornet missiles to the Gaza Strip and he is proud of that (YouTube, November 13, 2018)**

### **Firing Kornet missiles from the Gaza Strip**

- ▶ The terrorist organizations started to employ the Kornet missiles since late 2010. **In December 2010**, Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi revealed that **a Kornet missile had been launched from the Gaza Strip at an IDF Merkava tank and penetrated its armor** (December 6, 2010).
- ▶ On November 10, 2012, during the evening, a Kornet missile was fired **at an IDF jeep** during a routine security activity near the border fence in the central Gaza Strip. **The jeep went up in flames and four Israeli soldiers were wounded**, one of them severely. **The military wing of the PFLP claimed responsibility**. In response, the Israeli Air Force attacked terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. The terrorist organizations retaliated by firing rockets and mortar shells at western Negev communities and triggered escalation, which lasted for several days (November 10-13, 2012). **The sequence of events that followed the firing of the Kornet missile led to the killing of Ahmad al-Jaabari, acting commander of Hamas's military wing, and to Operation Pillar of Defense** (which started on November 14, 2012).



**Kornet missile hitting the IDF jeep (from a video released by the Salah al-Din Battalions, Haaretz daily YouTube page, November 11, 2012)**

- During Operation Pillar of Defense, the terrorist organizations used Kornet missiles. They also used them during Operation Protective Edge, without causing fatalities, to best of the ITIC's knowledge.



**Kornet missile displayed in an exhibition in Rafah, where missiles (or replicas of missiles) used during Operation Pillar of Defense were presented by the PIJ (website of the Qods Battalions, December 26, 2012)**

### Firing a Kornet missile at a school bus

- **On April 7, 2011, Hamas operatives fired a Kornet missile at a school bus near the Sa'ad junction** (south of the city of Sderot). A few minutes before the launch, **dozens of students got off the bus**. The driver and a boy, aged 16, remained on the bus. The boy was fatally wounded by shrapnel and died of his wounds, while the bus driver was slightly wounded. **The missile launch triggered escalation**, which lasted from April 7 until April 10, 2011. The IDF attacked numerous targets in the Gaza Strip, including terrorist squads, terrorist infrastructure, smuggling tunnels, and weapons.
- **The missile was deliberately fired at what was clearly a civilian target.** Firing rockets and mortar shells is considered statistical fire, targeting civilian population concentrations but without any specific target. **On the other hand, the firing at the bus was carried out**

with an advanced, laser-guided anti-tank missile, directly fired at a clearly civilian target, a yellow school bus (in many countries, school buses are painted yellow).



The school bus hit by the Kornet missile fired by Hamas  
(Reuters, photo: Shalom Gaziel, April 7, 2011)



The school bus hit by the Kornet missile (NRG, photo: Eddie Israel, April 7, 2011)