Pipe bomb thrown at IDF troops on Gaza fence; soldiers respond with fire

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Three Palestinians were spotted crawling towards the Gaza border fence in the early hours of Friday morning before they threw a pipe bomb at soldiers patrolling the area, according to the Israel Defense Forces.

The troops, who were not hit by the bomb and sustained no injuries, responded by firing at the Palestinians, the army said in a statement.

There were no reports of Palestinian injuries.

Earlier Thursday, the army said it detonated a large bomb that had been placed along the Gaza security fence by Palestinians during a recent riot.

The IDF said the placement of the improvised explosive device showed that the Gaza-ruling Hamas terror group was trying to keep up the clashes along the border, despite the reported ongoing ceasefire talks with Israel.

The large IED, which was placed inside a blue jerrycan, was found earlier this week by the IDF next to the security fence in the southern Gaza Strip.

“The planting of the explosive device by the terrorist cell under the cover of a violent demonstration is further evidence that the Hamas terror group is working to maintain the conflict in the fence area and to injure IDF soldiers, while using residents of the Gaza Strip as human shields and as cover for terrorist activities,” the army said.

On Monday, several thousand Palestinians rioted along the Gaza security fence, burning tires and throwing rocks at IDF troops on the other side, the army said.

In response, Israeli troops fired tear gas canisters and, in some cases, live gunshots at the Palestinian rioters, according to the IDF.

No significant injuries were reported on either side.

A surge of violence in Gaza began in March with a series of protests along the border that were dubbed the “March of Return.” The clashes, which Israel says are being orchestrated by Gaza’s Hamas rulers, have included regular rock and Molotov cocktail attacks on troops, as well as shooting and IED attacks aimed at IDF soldiers and attempts to breach the border fence.

Since the protests began, at least 127 Palestinians have been killed in clashes, according to a tally from The Associated Press. Hamas, which seeks to destroy Israel, has acknowledged that dozens of those killed were its members. Others have been identified as members of the Iran-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, the second-largest terrorist organization in the Strip. During that time, a Gaza sniper killed an Israeli soldier.

During the demonstrations, protesters have also launched incendiary kites and balloons into Israel, sparking fires that have destroyed forests, burned crops and killed livestock. Over 7,000 acres of land have been burned, causing millions of shekels in damages, according to Israeli officials.