IDF officer hurt by gunfire, Hamas fighter killed as Gaza border heats up

January 22, 2019

By Judah Ari Gross

The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-officer-lightly-hurt-in-gaza-border-clash-in-second-flareup-of-day/>

An Israeli soldier was injured and a fighter with the Hamas terror group killed Tuesday in an exchange of fire along the Gaza border, as the restive frontier saw a resurgence of violence.

A Palestinian sniper opened fire at a group of IDF soldiers during a riot along the Gaza border, hitting the helmet of an officer and lightly injuring him, in the second shooting attack of the day, the army said. The helmet saved the soldier’s life, military sources said.

In response, the Israel Defense Forces targeted an observation post belonging to the Hamas terror group in eastern Gaza, near the el-Bureij refugee camp, the army said.

According to Hamas, one of its fighters was killed in the strike on the terror group’s position and two other members of the terror group were injured, one of them seriously.

The Israeli military later released video footage both of that tank fire and an earlier strike on a Hamas post in response to another shooting attack on IDF troops along the Gaza border.

In the video, three figures can be seen walking away from the observation post before an incoming tank shell hits the structure and causes a large explosion, which knocks them to the ground.

The riot occurred in southern Gaza, across from the Israeli community of Kibbutz Kissufim. The military said rioters threw rocks at IDF soldiers on the other side of the security fence.

During the clashes, a sniper opened fire at the troops, according to the IDF.

“A bullet struck the helmet of an IDF officer who was stationed at the scene,” the army said.

The officer was taken to Beerhsheba’s Soroka Medical Center for treatment. A cut on his head was bandaged, and he was released hours later, the hospital said.

Initially, the IDF said it was not clear if the officer had been injured by gunfire or by a rocks, but later determined that he had indeed been struck by a sniper’s bullet.

In addition, five Palestinians also approached the border during the riot. Two of them breached the security fence and entered Israeli territory before quickly running back into the Strip.

The IDF retaliated to the riot by targeting the Hamas post near the border.

The Hamas member who was killed was identified as 24-year-old Mahmoud Abed al-Nabahin by the Gaza health ministry. On its website, Hamas’s Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades wrote al-Nabahin was a “fighter” who was “martyred” in the Israeli attack on its observation post.

Earlier in the day, shots were fired at Israeli troops on the border of the northern Gaza Strip, similarly prompting the Israeli military to destroy a nearby Hamas post, the army said.

No troops were harmed in the shooting attack.

The Israeli military did not indicate who it believed fired the shots. The Hamas post in northern Gaza was targeted because, as a rule, the IDF holds the terror group responsible for all violence emanating from the Gaza Strip, after it seized control of the enclave in 2007 by ousting the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority.

Tuesday’s exchanges came as Qatar prepares to transfer $15 million in payouts to Hamas civil servants in the Gaza Strip, the third such installment for the terror group to be approved by the Israeli government. The funds were expected to be transferred later this week, after they were initially stalled by Israel in response to a flareup in cross-border violence, a Qatari diplomat said on Sunday.

Qatar’s envoy to the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, Mohammed al-Emadi, told Reuters the latest cash transfer was due to reach the Palestinian territory by Wednesday.

Since March, Palestinians have been holding regular protests on the border. Israel has accused Gaza’s Hamas rulers of using the demonstrations as a cover for attacks on troops and attempts to breach the security fence.

Israel has demanded an end to the violent demonstrations along the border in any ceasefire agreement.