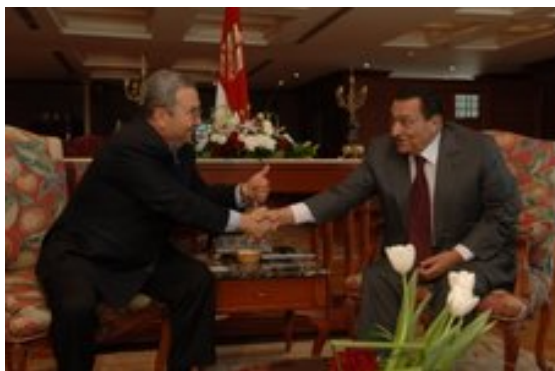




**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
Israel Intelligence Heritage
and Commemoration Center**

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation May 13-20, 2008

Intensive contacts are held regarding the lull...



Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak meet at Sharm el-Sheikh (Ariel Hermoni for the Israeli Defense Ministry, May 19).

...while intensive rocket fire continues



A direct Grad rocket hit on the Hutzot Mall in Ashqelon (The Israel Project, May 14).

Overview

- Egypt is currently conducting intensive activity concerning its initiative for a lull in the fighting in the Gaza Strip. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, who met at Sharm el-Sheikh with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and other upper-echelon Egyptians, presented Israel's position. Omar Suleiman, head of Egypt's General Intelligence, is slated to meet with a delegation of senior Hamas figures who have arrived in Egypt. Apparently the lull initiative is about to be decided.
- On the ground, the Palestinian terrorist organizations continue firing a large number of rockets at western Negev population centers. Especially notable was the direct Grad rocket hit on the Hutzot Mall in Ashqelon. Hamas continues threatening to escalate its attacks if Israel does not agree to the lull on Hamas terms, while Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has made it clear that continued rocket fire is liable to deteriorate the situation and lead to a broad IDF action.

Important Events

Intensive rocket attacks continue

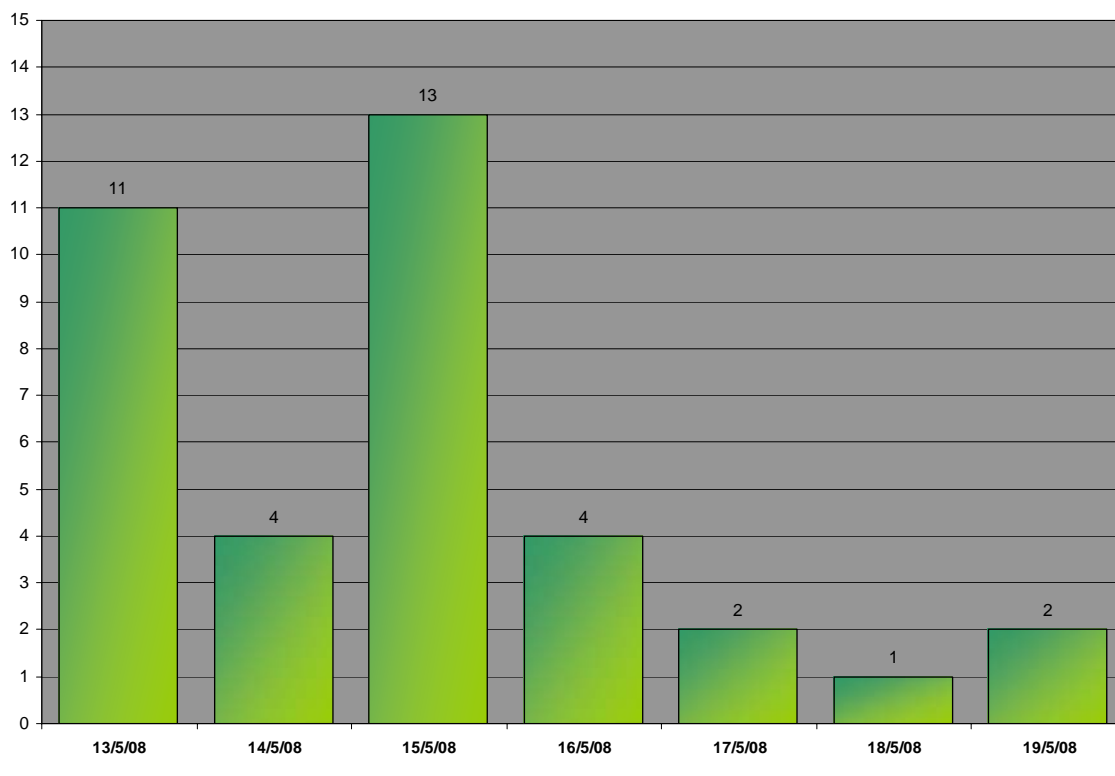
■ This past week **large numbers of rockets and mortar shells** continued to attack Sderot and the population centers around the Gaza Strip. There were 37 identified rocket hits in Israeli territory (compared with 38 the previous week). In addition, 17 mortar shells were fired at Israeli towns and villages close to the Gaza border. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility for the attacks.



Firing a Grad rocket at Ashqelon, from a Democratic Front video cassette falsely claiming responsibility for the attack (Al-Jazeera TV, May 15).

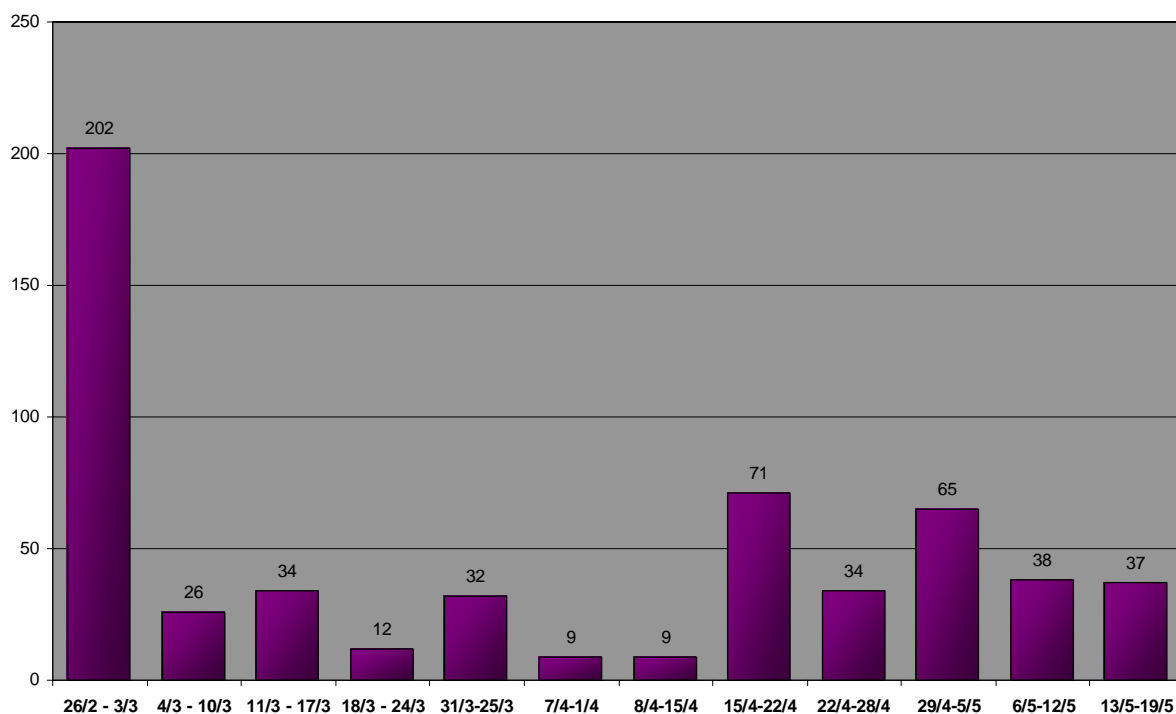
■ Particularly notable was the Grad rocket attack on a shopping mall in Ashqelon, which wounded 100 Israelis, seven of them critically (May 14).¹

Daily Distribution of Identified Rocket Hits in Israel



¹ For further information about the Grad rocket attack on the mall at Ashqelon see our May 18, 2008 Bulletin entitled "A Grad rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hit a crowded shopping mall in Ashqelon, injuring 100 people, seven of them critically" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_150508e.htm.

Weekly Distribution of Identified Rocket Hits in Israel



Counterterrorist Activities

The IDF kills a terrorist operative near Nablus

■ On May 19 a Palestinian reached the Hawara roadblock (south of Nablus), arousing the suspicions of the IDF force stationed there. The soldiers observed him touch a belt he was wearing which they suspected might be an explosive belt. Ordered to raise his hands and halt, he continued his approach while lowering his hands toward the belt, and was shot and killed by the soldiers. **Four pipe charges were found on his body.** (IDF Spokesman's Website, May 19).



The pipe charges found on the body of the Palestinian terrorist at the Hawara roadblock in Nablus (IDF Spokesman, May 20).

■ The terrorist's body was taken to the hospital in Nablus where he was identified as Fahmi Abd al-Jawaad al-Darduk, 16, from Nablus. A group calling itself the Struggle and Return faction of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for sending the terrorist and threatened to attempt additional attacks (Ma'an News Agency, May 20).

Israeli-Egyptian Contacts Concerning the Lull in the Fighting

- On May 19 and 20 intensive contacts were held in Egypt concerning the Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting. On May 19 Defense Minister Ehud Barak met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and other high-echelon Egyptians at Sharm el-Sheikh for the talks.
- According to Israeli media reports, Ehud Barak made it clear that continued rocket fire **is liable to deteriorate the situation** which will lead to a IDF Israeli action. According to the same reports, in Ehud Barak's opinion the lull can only be implemented after a complete cessation of both terrorist attacks and terrorist organization buildup, including preventing the smuggling of weapons, funds and terrorist operatives into the Gaza Strip. Israel also demands the release of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier abducted almost two years ago, should be part of the process for settling the situation on the ground.
- The Hamas delegation, which has already arrived in Egypt, is slated to meet on May 20 with Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian General Intelligence, and other senior Egyptian figures to discuss Israel's response to the Egyptian initiative. The delegation includes high-level Hamas members from the Gaza Strip and Damascus, among them Musa Abu Marzuq and Mahmoud al-Zahar.
- According to the Israel newspaper Haaretz, "Egyptian sources" stated that the meeting with the Hamas delegation would be decisive, since after that it would be possible to reach an unofficial arrangement to begin stopping all terrorist attacks from the Gaza Strip at the same time the IDF stopped its military offensive activities there. According to the same report, Israel does not intend to make a formal statement accepting the lull, but rather will allow the situation to develop gradually, and will examine the events on the ground (Haaretz article by Avi Issacharoff, Amos Harel and Barak Ravid, May 20, 2008).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Nakba Day events

■ This year the events held to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Israel's independence were accompanied by events marking Nakba Day² throughout the Palestinian Authority-administered territories. This year the events (held separately by Fatah and Hamas) focused on "the right to return," i.e., the return of the Palestinian refugees to their houses within the territory of the State of Israel. Nakba Day events included closed stores, processions, conferences, symposiums, displays and other symbolic events.³



A procession marking Nakba Day on its way to the Erez Crossing (Al-Aqsa TV, May 16).

■ On May 15 Hamas organized a procession to the Erez Crossing; the event was covered by Hamas's television station, Al-Aqsa TV. When the procession neared the crossing **the IDF fired into the air** and the crowd dispersed. In Judea and Samaria there were processions and rallies to mark Nakba Day. Most of the events took place quietly, with the exception of isolated incidents in which rioters confronted IDF forces.

Hamas uses force to suppress a Fatah Nakba Day demonstration

■ On May 17 Fatah held a rally in the Jabaliya refugee camp (situated in the northern Gaza Strip) making Nakba Day. Hamas security forces used force to disperse the rally, beating the participants. According to reports in the Palestinian media, suppression of the rally was accompanied by violent invasions of the homes of Gaza Strip Fatah activists, causing property damage. Thirty Palestinians were wounded in the events (Wafa News Agency, Ma'an News Agency, May 15).

■ The events were another illustration of how Hamas suppresses Fatah in the Gaza Strip. The events were condemned by Fatah and PA spokesmen, and by the PFLP, whose activists also participated in the Jabaliya rally. The PFLP stated that Hamas operatives had "brutally beaten" senior PFLP operatives, despite a previous PFLP-Hamas coordination (Al-Hayat, May 18).

² The catastrophe the Palestinians feel was visited upon them with the founding of the State of Israel.

³ For further information see our May 14, 2008 Bulletin entitled "Nakba Day events in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (as of May 14, 2008)" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/nakba_day_e.htm.

Palestinian investment conference in Bethlehem

■ On May 21-23 an international conference is expected to take place in Bethlehem, attended by businessmen from all over the world coming to examine the possibilities of investing in the PA. In preparation the Palestinians prepared an investment plan for \$2 billion in various spheres, especially real estate. Participation of the Arab and other countries is expected, including Israel, as well as of representatives of various financial organizations.

■ The conference has been coordinated between Israel and the PA (as part of the eased restrictions package Defense Minister Ehud Barak presented to American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when they met on March 30⁴). Both sides arranged the arrival of 900 participants. Israel increased the Allenby Bridge's hours of activity and made other arrangements for the arrival of the invited participants.

Enforcing law and order in northern Samaria

■ Palestinian security force operatives continued the enforcement of law and order in Jenin and northern Samaria. On May 18 they detained senior PIJ operative Abd al-Fatah Hazmia. This past week they expanded their activities to other locations in Judea and Samaria, including Bethlehem and Hebron.



Palestinian security operatives deploying in Tubas, south of Jenin (Palestinian TV, May 18).

Attacks on Christian and “Western” institutions in the Gaza Strip

■ During the past week there were two more attacks in the Gaza Strip on Christian institutions and those perceived as “Western:”

- Unknown persons exploded a powerful explosive device at the entrance of a fast food restaurant near the Al-Quds Open University in the center of Gaza City, completely destroying it. According to the owner, it was the second time his business had been attacked (Ma'an News Agency, May 18).

⁴ For further information see our April 2 Bulletin entitled “News of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict March 25-April 1, 2008” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/mar253108e.htm.

- Unknown persons exploded an explosive device near a Christian school run by nuns but attended mainly by Muslim students (AP, May 16).

- They were not the first incidents in which radical Islamic networks attacked Christian or “Western” institutions in the Gaza Strip.⁵ Hamas, which has complete control over the Gaza Strip, has not taken effective steps to stop them.

⁵ For further information see February 21, 2008 date Bulletin entitled “YMCA library building in Gaza City blown up: another incident in a series of attacks on Western and Christian targets in the Gaza Strip by groups associated with the global jihad and radical Islam” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/gj_200208e.htm.