



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
Israel Intelligence Heritage
and Commemoration Center

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

April 15-22, 2008



Jeep camouflaged as an IDF vehicle used by terrorist operatives during the attack at Kerem Shalom (Al-Aqsa TV, April 19).



BRDM armored personnel carrier confiscated by Hamas from Abu Mazen's security forces, used during the attack at the Kerem Shalom Crossing (Photo courtesy of the IDF Spokesman, April 19).

Overview

- During the week of Passover there has been a Hamas-initiated escalation of terrorism in the Gaza Strip. On April 19, Passover Eve, a broad-scale combined attempted attack was prevented near the Kerem Shalom Crossing and in the region of Kissufim. Two car bombs were camouflaged as IDF jeeps and blown up. In another attack in the central Gaza Strip three IDF soldiers were killed in an exchange of fire following the identification of a terrorist squad placing IEDs near the security fence. The attacks were accompanied by barrages of rocket and mortar shell fire, whose intensity increased during the past week.
- At the same time, various mediators have discussed ideas with the Hamas leadership for agreement on a number of issues, including Gilad Shalit, the abducted Israeli soldier, a lull in the fighting in the Gaza Strip and the opening of the crossings. The mediation attempts made by former United States president Jimmy Carter led Hamas to promise the receipt of a letter from Gilad Shalit, but nothing more. The Egyptians continued their efforts and reported that Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian intelligence, would soon visit Israel.

Important Events

Three IDF soldiers killed in an exchange of fire with a Hamas terrorist squad

■ On the morning of April 16 an IDF force near Kibbutz Beerli (about 4 km – 2 ½ miles – southwest of the Karni Crossing) observed **two armed Palestinians placing IEDs near the security fence**. The force attempted to prevent their action, and entering the Gaza Strip found themselves ambushed by a six-man terrorist operative squad. The terrorists, some of whom had been in hiding, shot at the IDF force, exploiting the fog cover. In the exchange of fire **three IDF soldiers were killed and three wounded**. The terrorists apparently managed to escape. **Hamas claimed responsibility** for the attack.¹



Weapons found during an IDF action inside a mosque on the outskirts of Sajaiya (IDF Spokesman, April 16).

IDF forces prevent broad-scale combined terrorist attack at the Kerem Shalom Crossing on Passover Eve

■ On the morning of April 19, Passover Eve, IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip prevented a broad-scale combined terrorist attack in the regions of the Kerem Shalom Crossing (the southern Gaza strip) and Kissufim.

■ The attack began close to six in the morning when a barrage of mortar shells was fired at Kibbutz Kerem Shalom, and IDF soldiers in the area were shot at with light weapons. Under the cover of gun and mortar shell fire, and aided by heavy fog, a BRDM armored personnel carrier

¹ For further information see our April 17 Bulletin entitled “Three IDF soldiers killed by Hamas gunfire in renewed escalation in the Gaza Strip (Update April 17, 2008)” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_170408e.htm.

broke through the crossing gate. Terrorist operatives **drove two car bombs disguised as IDF jeeps** in through the break. One blew up close to the guard tower and the second approached the IDF soldiers nearby and blew up close to them. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.²

Sharp increase in the number of rockets and mortar shells fired

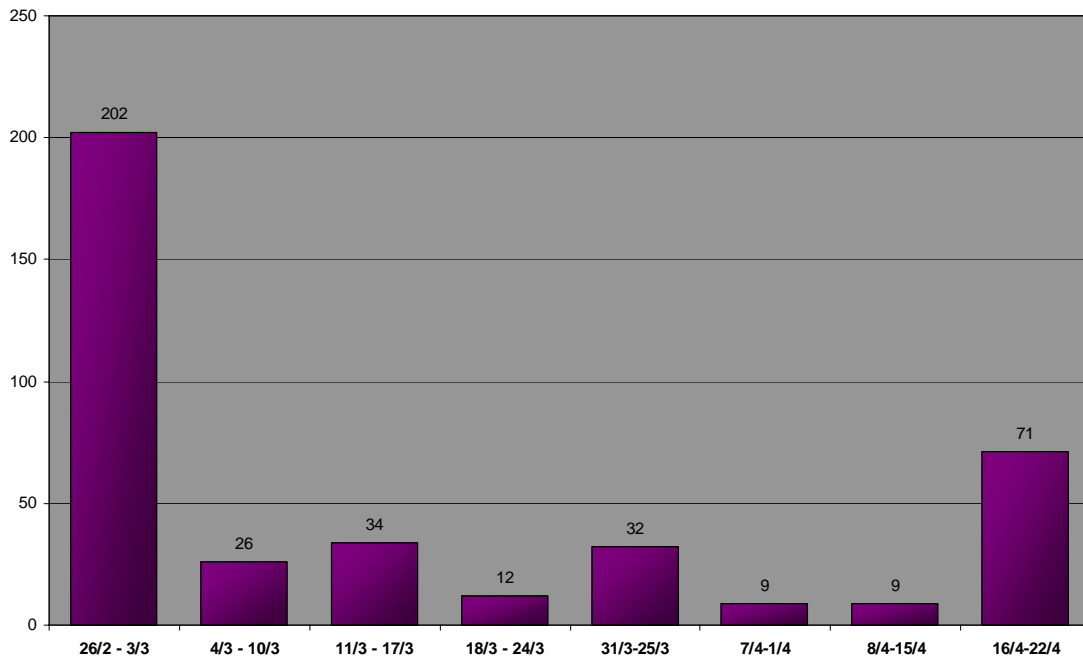
■ During the past week there was a sharp increase in the number of rockets and mortar shells fired at Israeli towns and villages in the western Negev and at Israeli security forces. A total of **71 rockets** were fired, compared with nine the previous week. Most of the rockets targeted Sderot. On April 21 one of them landed near a car on Kibbutz Gevim, seriously wounding a four-year old child. The Palestinians also shot at agricultural workers gathering potatoes in the fields of Kibbutz Nir Oz.



Palestinian Islamic Jihad rockets fired in close proximity to a residential neighborhood (Al-Alam TV, April 20).

² For further information see our April 22 Bulletin entitled “On Passover Eve IDF forces prevented a combined mass-casualty attack at the Kerem Shalom Crossing” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_210408e.htm.

Weekly distribution of rocket fire



Counterterrorist Activities

The Gaza Strip

■ IDF forces continued their routine counterterrorist activities:

- **April 21** – An Israeli Air Force plane struck a terrorist squad in the region of Jabaliya (the northern Gaza Strip), killing all the operatives. The squad was on its way to launch rockets into Israel. Two Hamas operatives were killed in other actions.
- **April 21** – The IAF struck an armed squad observed near the security fence close to Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, killing one terrorist. Two others were killed by IDF forces which entered the Gaza Strip. The terrorists were found to have large quantities of weapons in their possession, including anti-tank missiles (Ynet, April 22).
- **April 21** – The IAF struck a vehicle in Rafah, killing two of its passengers (IDF Spokesman, April 21).
- **April 21** – During an IDF action in the northern Gaza Strip a number of terrorist operatives were targeted, among them one carrying anti-tank missiles (IDF Spokesman, April 21).

- **April 16** – The IDF attacked a squad of anti-tank missile launchers in the central Gaza Strip and a short time later IDF forces attacked terrorist operatives who had opened fire on them (IDF Spokesman, April 16).

Judea and Samaria

■ IDF forces continued their routine counterterrorist activities:

- **April 18** – During an action in the Balata refugee camp Hani Muhammad Hassan Kaabi, a senior Fatah-Tanzim operative, was killed. He opened fire on the security forces as he was trying to escape. The operative had been involved in the planning and carrying out of various attacks, including suicide bombing attacks. **He was recently involved in an attempt to poison the food in a Ramat Gan restaurant³** (IDF Spokesman, April 18).
- **April 18** – A Palestinian armed with a knife went to a Border Police post close to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and tried to stab one of the soldiers at the roadblock. Other soldiers at the post overcame and detained him (IDF Spokesman, April 18).
- **April 17** – During an IDF action in Qabatiya (south of Jenin) **Bilal Hamoudi Muhammad Salah**, head of the town's PIJ network, and an aide were killed. Bilal Salah had been imprisoned in Israel in the past. He was involved in a number of attacks, including shootings and laying IEDs to attack Israeli security forces acting in the Jenin region (IDF Spokesman, April 17).



Weapons found on the bodies of Bilal Salah and his aide (IDF Spokesman, April 17).

- **April 17** – During an Israeli security force action in Nablus 15 Hamas operatives were detained (IDF Spokesman, April 17).

³For further information see our April 13 Bulletin entitled “The Israeli security forces exposed two Palestinians from Nablus who admitted they planned to poison the food in the restaurant in Ramat Gan where they worked illegally” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_130408e.htm.

The Gaza Strip Crossings

■ Hamas continues to instigate “popular protests” as part of the campaign it is waging over the Gaza Strip crossings. Senior Hamas figures again threatened that if the blockade were not lifted there would be a “popular eruption.” At a demonstration held at the Rafah Crossing on April 15, Hamas spokesman **Ayman Taha** called for an immediate improvement in the situation and threatened that **Israel could expect “more eruptions”** (Ma’an News Agency, April 18). Answering the Hamas call, dozens of women and children gathered at the Erez Crossing in protest of the situation, waving signs condemning the “Israeli blockade” and demanding the crossings be opened (Ma’an News Agency, April 15).



A procession in Beit Hanoun to protest the blockade (Al-Aqsa TV, April 21).

The Annapolis Process

Easing the conditions of the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria

■ On Friday, April 18, there was a security coordination meeting attended by the head of the civilian administration, the Palestinian Authority’s minister of civilian affairs and representatives of the Palestinian security forces. One of the issues discussed was continuing the policy of easing the conditions of the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria. It was agreed that the IDF would allow 20 police stations to be opened in cities and villages in Judea and Samaria and that they would be manned by Palestinian policemen (IDF Spokesman, April 18).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Contacts and statements made regarding a lull in the fighting

■ According to the Egyptian daily **Al-Ahram**, Egypt reached an agreement in principle with Hamas regarding a lull in the fighting with Israel. The newspaper stated that Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian intelligence, would visit Jerusalem in the near future to report the results of the Egyptian-Palestinian contacts. The Quwaiti newspaper, **Al-Ra'i** reported that according to Egyptian sources, it had been agreed that the lull would involve the Gaza Strip first, which would be separated from Judea and Samaria (Al-Hayat, April 21).

■ [Bullet] Former American president Jimmy Carter's attempt to promote a cease fire between Israel and Hamas failed. He went on a flying trip between Jerusalem and Damascus, where he spoke with senior Hamas figures, including the delegation headed by Mahmoud al-Zahar, who had arrived from the Gaza Strip. In the talks held in Damascus Khaled Mashal rejected Carter's suggestion that Hamas announce a unilateral one-month cease fire. Khaled Mashal said that Hamas preferred to continue indirect negotiations, to which it is committed. No agreement was reached regarding Gilad Shalit, the abducted Israeli soldier, however **Khaled Mashal expressed readiness to deliver a letter from him to Israel.**



Khaled Mashal speaking about the abducted Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit (Al-Jazeera TV, April 21).

■ During his visit Carter criticized the isolationist stance taken by the United States and Israel toward Hamas, and said that there was very little chance of reaching a peace agreement if a major player like Hamas were not party to it. A spokesman for the American State Department said that the United States had not seen any change in Hamas's position, which was one of terrorism and violence. The United States again expressed its stated policy that as long as

Hamas did not recognize the right of the State of Israel to exist there was no basis for negotiations (American State Department Website, April 18).

Calls for more Israeli soldiers to be abducted for Palestinian Prisoner Day

■ At the same time, in view of the failure of the attack at the Kerem Shalom Crossing and the events of Palestinian Prisoner Week currently being held in the Palestinian arena, **Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip have increased their calls for more attacks to abduct Israeli soldiers.** On April 20, **Fathi Hamad**, one of the Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip and director of the Al-Aqsa TV station, told a mass rally in Gaza City that **“more soldiers will be abducted...We will make one deal after another by continuing the abductions”** (Al-Aqsa TV, April 20).