IDF: Palestinian tries to ram car into soldiers, is killed, in 3rd attack of day

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A Palestinian man attempted to ram his car into a group of Israeli soldiers outside the West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday afternoon, before the troops opened fire, killing him, in the third attack of the day, the army said.

Channel 10, however, reported the driver to be a 60-year-old man and said the incident was likely not terror-related.

One soldier was lightly injured in the incident, the army said. It was not immediately clear if the injury stemmed from the alleged car-ramming.

According to the IDF, the driver attempted to ram his car into the servicemen outside the town of el-Bireh, adjacent to Ramallah in the central West Bank, as they were taking part in the ongoing efforts to locate the terrorists from a deadly shooting attack earlier in the day.

“Security forces on the scene opened fire, neutralizing the terrorist,” the IDF said in a statement.

According to Palestinian officials, the man died of his wounds. The Palestinian Authority Health Ministry spokesman Osama Najjar identified the driver as 58-year-old Hamdan al-Arda.

Najjar told the Times of Israel that Arda, who was a resident of Araba, a village in the northern West Bank, was the owner of an aluminum company in al-Bireh and was shot dead by Israeli forces a short distance from his business’s headquarters.

A short while later, the army dispelled rumors of another vehicular attack on Thursday afternoon near the Kochav Yaakov settlement, saying it was a car accident.

Another alleged car-ramming attempt was reported on Thursday evening by Hadashot news near the Givat Assaf outpost — site of the Thursday morning shooting. The IDF did not confirm the reports.

The suspected attempts came hours after two terrorists opened fire at a group of soldiers and civilians standing at a bus stop outside Givat Assaf, killing two troops and seriously injuring another serviceman and a civilian, before fleeing the scene.

According to Palestinian media, the vehicle used in the gun attack was abandoned nearby, and the two suspects — the driver and the shooter — continued on foot. The IDF said they fled in the direction of Ramallah.

Two of the victims, soldiers in their early 20s, were declared dead at the scene.

The injured soldier, 21, was in critical condition with a gunshot wound to the head, according to Jerusalem’s Hadassah Hospital Ein Kerem.

“His condition is very serious. There is a threat to his life,” a Hadassah spokesperson said.

The female civilian was seriously injured with a gunshot wound to the pelvis and taken to Shaare Zedek Medical Center’s trauma unit in Jerusalem for treatment, the hospital said.

Doctors there said her condition stabilized after she received blood transfusions, and she was taken into surgery to repair the damage caused by the bullet.

The military censor initially prevented publication of the fact that three of the victims were soldiers until their families could be notified.

The servicemen were guarding the bus stop when the shooting occurred.

Israeli troops have been operating extensively throughout the area to find the terrorists, setting up checkpoints and roadblocks, including at the entrances to Ramallah and el-Bireh.

Additional infantry battalions were sent into the West Bank to defend roads and settlements and to conduct additional searches and arrests, the army said.

The West Bank has seen a significant increase in the number of attacks on Israeli civilians and soldiers in recent weeks, after months of relative calm in the area, raising concerns of a potential renewed outbreak of regular, serious violence in the region.

Early Thursday, a Palestinian man stabbed two Border Police officers in the Old City of Jerusalem before dawn, lightly injuring both of them. In the struggle with the terrorist, the officers shot and killed him, police said.

The military blamed the increase in attacks both on terror groups’ ongoing efforts, the “copycat” phenomenon and a number of significant dates coming up this week, notably the anniversary of Hamas’s founding.

The shooting attack at the Givat Assaf bus stop took place some two kilometers (1.25 miles) from Ofra, where on Sunday a number of terrorists driving in a white car opened fire at a group of people standing at the settlement’s bus stop, hitting seven of them, including a seven-months pregnant woman who was critically injured and whose baby later died as a result of the attack.

It was not immediately clear if the two attacks were carried out by the same group — according to the army, only some of the perpetrators of Sunday’s shooting have been apprehended — or if it was a “copycat” attack, according to IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus.

The Hamas terror group praised Thursday’s attack, but did not claim responsibility for it.

“The heroic Silwad operation is a response to the Zionist occupation’s crimes and behavior in the occupied West Bank,” Abdelaltif al-Qanou, a spokesman for the terror group, wrote on Twitter. “The West Bank’s youth and men will remain rebels against the occupation and continue to clash with it until it is banished.”

On Wednesday night, the Israeli military arrested a number of suspects who were believed to have carried out Sunday night’s shooting attack and shot dead a third, who security officials said tried to attack Israeli troops during an escape attempt. On Thursday, the army said the search for additional perpetrators was ongoing.