**IDF Kills Gaza Terrorists, Including Senior Terror Leader**

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The IDF hit and killed several Gaza-based terrorist gangs, including a senior leader of the Popular Resistance Committees terror group, today.

Shortly before 5:00 p.m. (Israel time) on Friday afternoon, IAF aircraft struck and killed the head of the Popular Resistance Committees, Zuhir Musa Ahmed Qaisi and his deputy, Mahmoud Ahmed Mahmoud Hanani.

The two were hit in northern Gaza, and the IDF Spokesperson said they had been involved in planning a terror attack from the Sinai Peninsula.

Zuhir Qaisi, born in 1963, planned and led in recent days a terrorist attack against Israeli targets on the Israel-Egypt border, the IDF said in a statement. The terror attack had been in its final preparation stages when Qaisi was struck and killed, the statement added.

Qaisi was one of the planners of the attack on Highway 12 near the border with Egypt in August of 2011, which killed eight Israelis, and was also involved in the firing of rockets at southern Israel, according to the IDF.

Shortly after 8:00 p.m. (Israel time), the IDF struck two additional terrorist cells, one in central Gaza and one in northern Gaza.

The members of both terrorist cells had been planning to fire rockets into southern Israel when they were struck, according to an IDF statement. Direct hits at the targets were identified.

“The IDF is not interested in escalation but is ready to defend Israeli citizens and to respond forcefully and decisively against any attempt to carry out terrorist activity,” the IDF Spokesperson said.

“Hamas, which takes advantage of the other terrorist organizations to perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israel, will be responsible for future action which the IDF chooses to take to remove the threat of terrorism and restore relative calm to the area,” the statement added.

Earlier on Friday, Gaza terrorists fired two mortar shells at Israeli towns in the Eshkol region on Friday afternoon.

The shells exploded in an open field, and there were no reports of physical injuries or damages.

On Thursday morning, as Israelis were celebrating the Purim holiday, terrorists fired a mortar into southern Israel.

The mortar shell exploded in an open field in the Eshkol Regional Council. The attack did not cause any physical injuries or property damage.