Israeli, an ex-US Marine, seriously wounded in West Bank shooting; terrorist caught

March 19, 2023

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The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-man-seriously-wounded-in-west-bank-shooting-attack/>

An Israeli man was shot and seriously wounded in a terror attack while driving through the northern West Bank town of Huwara on Sunday, the military and medics said.

According to the Magen David Adom ambulance service, the man, in his 40s, was seriously hurt after sustaining gunshot wounds to his head and shoulder in the attack on the Route 60 highway. He was taken to the Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikvah, where his condition was later upgraded to moderate-to-serious. Doctors said his life was not in danger.

The victim was later named as David Stern from the settlement of Itamar, a former US Marine who works as a weapons instructor. US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides confirmed that Stern is also an American citizen.

Footage from the scene showed the windshield of the car riddled with bullets.

A woman in the car, identified as Stern’s wife, was also taken to a hospital suffering from traumatic shock. She was not hit by the gunfire, MDA said.

The Israel Defense Forces said the Palestinian terrorist was shot by both the victim and soldiers immediately after the attack, before he fled the scene on foot.

After a brief chase, troops located and detained the gunman, who had been wounded by the victim’s and troops’ gunfire, the IDF said.

The makeshift “Carlo” submachine gun used in the attack, which the terrorist apparently dropped while fleeing, was also seized.

The gunman was taken by military medics for treatment at a hospital, before he was to be handed over to the Shin Bet for questioning.

Palestinian media named him as Laith Nadim Nassar, from the nearby village of Madama, south of Nablus.

The attack came exactly three weeks after two Israeli brothers were shot dead in a terror attack while driving through Huwara. In the wake of that attack, settlers staged a riot in the town, setting fire to homes and cars. One Palestinian was shot dead.

Huwara has long been a flashpoint in the West Bank as it is just about the only Palestinian town that Israelis regularly travel through in order to reach settlements.

There are plans to build a bypass road for settlers to avoid having to travel through Huwara, but the construction work has been stalled.

The earlier attack, on February 26, came as Israeli, Palestinian, American, Egyptian, and Jordanian officials convened in Aqaba for a meeting aimed to help foster regional calm. The shooting on Sunday came on the day of a similar meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, ahead of the sensitive Ramadan period, which begins at the end of this week.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he was praying for the “wounded hero” who succeeded in shooting the terrorist attacker, adding: “Whoever tries to harm Israeli citizens — will bear the responsibility.”

Hazem Qassem, a spokesman for the Hamas terror group hailed the shooting, saying it was “a natural reaction to the occupation’s crimes against our people in the West Bank and Jerusalem.”

The terror group, however, did not claim responsibility for the attack.

In another suspected attack on Sunday, medics said they were treating a 64-year-old Israeli man who was lightly hurt after his car came under gunfire and stone-throwing in the West Bank.

MDA said the man was hurt at the Doar Junction near the West Bank village of Ras Karkar. He then continued driving until he met up with medics at the nearby Hashmonaim Checkpoint.

Tensions between Israel and the Palestinians have been high for the past year, with the IDF conducting near-nightly raids in the West Bank amid a series of deadly Palestinian terror attacks. Those tensions have ramped up even further in recent weeks, which saw a cycle of deadly Israeli raids and Palestinian attacks, as well as an uptick in settler violence.

Palestinian terror attacks in Israel and the West Bank in recent months have left 14 Israelis dead and several more seriously hurt.

At least 85 Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the year, most of them while carrying out attacks or during clashes with security forces, though some were uninvolved civilians and others were killed under circumstances that are being investigated.