Armed Palestinian dressed as Israeli soldier arrested in West Bank

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An armed Palestinian man dressed up as an Israeli soldier was arrested near the West Bank settlement of Ma’ale Levona on Monday, officials said.

Israeli residents of the area spotted the suspect walking along Route 60 and alerted local authorities, who informed the military, the Binyamin regional council said in a statement.

Israel Defense Forces soldiers stationed in the area arrested the suspect and searched the large bag he was carrying.

The Palestinian was found to be carrying in his bag a firearm with ammunition, a meat cleaver, a smaller knife, and pepper spray, footage showed.

According to Hebrew-language media reports, the man is from the West Bank city of Jenin. At least four Palestinian suspects were killed in a gun battle with Israeli troops in the city early Monday morning.

It was not clear if the two incidents were related.

The IDF said the suspect was being interrogated.

The mayor of the Binyamin Regional Council, Israel Gantz, thanked  IDF soldiers and local security officers for their quick response. “The combination of forces prevented a serious incident, thank God,” he said.

The incident came amid heightened tensions in the West Bank and in the city of Jenin specifically.

According to the United Nations, some 57 Palestinians have died during confrontations with Israeli soldiers this year, the highest toll since 2016. Some were killed during violent clashes with troops, while others died in more ambiguous circumstances.

Earlier this month, a suspected terrorist — Dia al-Sabarini, 25 — was fatally wounded in a gun battle with Israeli troops in Jenin, dying of his injuries last Wednesday. Five other Palestinians were wounded in those clashes after Israeli troops entered Jenin in an arrest raid, according to Palestinian medics.

Israeli police said at the time that members of its counterterrorism unit, known by its Hebrew acronym Yamam, “neutralized a number of terrorists” who had opened fire at troops. Forces came under “massive fire” during the operations, and the attackers also hurled explosive devices, Molotov cocktails and rocks at the troops, police said.

Overnight Israeli arrest raids in West Bank towns are frequently met with fierce resistance from local Palestinians — mostly in the form of rock-throwing and Molotov cocktail attacks — though the use of live gunfire against troops is rare.

Also Monday, two rockets were launched from the Gaza Strip toward the city of Sderot. The Iron Dome missile defense system intercepted one rocket, as the second fell short inside the Palestinian enclave, according to the military.