How IDF commandos destroyed Hamas recruitment center, PIJ rocket factory

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<https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-810420>

Since the IDF started withdrawing from parts of Gaza where it had taken apart [Hamas’s battalions](https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-805268) in the late winter and early spring, the Gaza terror group has been using innovative ways to rebuild its combat forces and to keep the broader population dependent on its rule.

In recent months, the IDF’s commando unit – composed of the Duvdevan, Egoz, and Maglan special units – has taken on many unique missions in Gaza, beyond the standard clearance of a certain sector of terrorist operations carried out by the regular IDF infantry.

The commando unit is run by Col. Omer Cohen, with whom The Jerusalem Post was embedded in Khan Yunis in southern Gaza in December.

During an operation in Tel el-Awa in northern Gaza near Shifa Hospital last Friday, the IDF said that Cohen’s commandos had uncovered a new [Hamas headquarters within a UNRWA building](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-810080).

What the IDF did not disclose until Monday, however, was that Hamas was using the UNRWA building as one of its critical centers for recruiting new fighters, drone-makers, and bomb builders.

After a firefight and the killing of a number of [Hamas operatives](https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-810352) inside, the IDF also took apart a series of stations at the UNRWA building, which included: Hamas controlling food aid right next to a station for signing up to its combat units, right next to a workshop for building drones, right next to a separate workshop for building improvised explosives.

**Recruitment methods exploit current humanitarian disaster**

In other words, Hamas used an UNRWA facility where all civilians would need to come to receive food, to juxtapose all of its various fighting needs and connect Gazan civilians’ conception of their future to Hamas first in terms of food, and then in terms of terrorism.

This new method of recruitment can sidestep significant periods of ideological orientation by using the current humanitarian disaster in Gaza as the main motivation for getting civilians to join Hamas and immediately also learn how to build threatening weapons.

Near the UNRWA facility, the commandos also found a rocket-making seminar concealed in a university.

In another operation connected to Rafah in southern Gaza where the IDF has been since early May, the IDF commandos eliminated the most important remaining weapons development location for Islamic Jihad in Gaza, aspects of which were underground.

THE IDF COMMANDOS acted rapidly and with precise intelligence to overcome all resistance at the Islamic Jihad weapons location and were able to intercept many of the Jihad fighters as well as the weapons they were making.

Despite these successes, the IDF warned that its soldiers would continue to encounter these systematic Hamas efforts to exploit humanitarian areas or tunnels for reconstituting its forces and its weaponry.

The IDF did not have real answers to what would break Hamas’s will to rebuild its military other than continued IDF missions to break apart any such rebuilding attempts before they expand to a dangerous point.

According to the IDF, Hamas is also using houses that seem half-destroyed and which the IDF has already attacked and moved on from, to hide many of its weapons, expecting that the military will not think to return to such locations.

Further, the IDF said that Hamas is often using children to run interference and as human shields when planting improvised explosives in areas where it anticipates IDF forces are likely to raid.

Also on Monday, leaks appeared in Yediot Aharonot regarding aspects of the IDF’s upcoming report on Hamas’s invasion of Kfar Aza.

Despite the leaks, the IDF said it has no plans to move up its publication of the Kfar Aza report, though that report was expected in the near future.

According to the report, 64 residents of Kfar Aza were massacred by Hamas, 19 were taken hostage, and five remain hostages of the terror group.

At the high-point of the fighting, 20 different IDF units fought there against 400 to 600 Hamas forces.

The initial Hamas force which invaded Kfar Aza included around 100 Hamas Nukhba terrorists.

In addition, the report notes, as with the Be’eri report which came out last week, that many IDF forces came to the Kfar Aza area, but then dawdled about what to do and what their mission parameters were for a crucial extended period, while Kfar Aza residents were being slaughtered.

There were also some new disclosures regarding Israel’s attempt to kill Hamas military chief Mohammad Deif on Saturday, with The New York Times reporting that Israeli intelligence had been tracking Hamas Khan Yunis Chief Rafa Salameh for weeks, but did not kill him, hoping to wait for Deif to show up.

There were no new indications on Monday about whether Deif was killed, and the issue may remain open for an extended period, even though Israeli intelligence is somewhat confident that he was killed.

Meanwhile, IDF soldiers have killed numerous Hamas terrorists in continued operations throughout the Gaza Strip, including RPG-armed terrorists in close combat in Rafah, the IDF announced on Monday.

Soldiers from Division 162 eliminated gunmen in close combat, while fighters from Brigade 8 killed one who was planting explosives in central Gaza.

On Sunday, the Nahal reconnaissance unit eliminated a group of RPG-armed fighters, and the air force struck dozens of Hamas targets, as well as Hamas forces who were trying to carry out surveillance of IDF forces.

IN THE NORTH, there were light exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah. Three security sources told Reuters that prominent Syrian pro-regime businessman Baraa Katerji was killed in an Israeli air strike.

The IDF said it targeted two Hezbollah positions at Mas-al-Jbil and fired artillery at Hezbollah forces maneuvering in a dangerous way in the al-Disa area.

Further, the military said that Hezbollah fired three separate solo rockets at different points, with the IDF air defense shooting down one of them and allowing the other two to fall into open spaces.

There were no reports of large fires after the rocket strikes.

Overall, recent days have seen a significant drop in military exchanges between the sides.

Separately, a vehicle was targeted in a strike on the Lebanese-Syrian border on Monday, according to Lebanese and Syrian reports.

The vehicle was reportedly on the Syrian side of the border.