



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
Israel Intelligence Heritage
and Commemoration Center**

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

January 22-29, 2008



**Egyptian security forces erecting a wire fence to reclose the breaches at Rafah
(Muhammad Salem for Reuters, January 28).**

Overview

- Events this past week focused on two shootings and a stabbing in Judea and Samaria. A border policeman was killed and a woman policeman critically wounded in a shooting near the Shoafat refugee camp north of Jerusalem. Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Hamas claimed responsibility for the attacks, which are clear proof that the Judea and Samaria terrorist organizations' operational networks continue their terrorist activity against Israel. There was a sharp drop in the number of rocket and mortar shell attacks during the week.
- A new situation was created on the ground along the Egyptian-Gazan border when the border fence along the Philadelphi route was breached in several spots. In our assessment, it was a move which was well-planned in advance by Hamas. It will strengthen Hamas's control over the Gaza Strip and increased the security threat to Israel. The Egyptians, who have avoided using force to end the massive stream of Gazans into Egyptian Rafah, are trying to find an internal Palestinian solution for the problem. Hamas has held dialogues with the Egyptians but does not intend to give up its achievement.

Important Events

Border police patrol shot at north of Jerusalem

- During the evening hours of January 24 terrorists opened fire on a border police patrol near the Shoafat refugee camp north of Jerusalem. The attack killed border policeman **Rami Zoari** and critically wounded a female policeman.
- Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack (Ma'an News Agency, January 24). A spokesman said the organization was no longer committed to a lull in the fighting and that it had to "respond to Israel's crimes in the Gaza Strip and its assassinations of organization activists in the West Bank" (Ynet, January 24).



**The scene of the attack at Shoafat
(Photo courtesy of Zaka, January 24)**

Attack at Kfar Etzion

- During the evening of January 24 two terrorist organizations infiltrated the yeshiva at Kfar Etzion (south of Jerusalem) wearing uniforms and armed with a knife and gun. A struggle broke and two of the yeshiva's teachers killed the terrorists. One Israeli suffered serious stab wounds and two more were slightly injured.
- On January 25 IDF forces surrounded the houses of the terrorists who had carried out the attack to conduct searches. During the searches there were confrontations between the IDF and Palestinian rioters which led to the death of a Palestinian youth who had been throwing stones at the soldiers.

Hamas Responses

- Hamas's Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack and revealed the names of the terrorists killed. They were Muhammad Fathi Sabarna and Mahmoud Khalil Sabarna from the village of Bayt Omar (near Hebron). According to the Hamas announcement the attack was supposed to stress the connection between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (Al-Qassam Website, January 25). According to Palestinian media reports, the two had been released from jail in Israel the previous week, where they had been imprisoned for a year for an infiltration attempt and for trying to steal weapons (Ma'an News Agency, January 25). We have no proof of the allegation.

■ In response to the Kfar Etzion attack, Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas's political bureau in Damascus, said that "the people have spoken and said that its path will always be that of the resistance [i.e., terrorism] and weapons together with national unity and Arab and Muslim support as long as the international community does not enable it to improve its situation in another way" (Al-Alam TV, January 26). Hamas's newspaper Felesteen claimed that the recent attacks "symbolize the recovery of the resistance [i.e., the terrorist organizations] in the West Bank, which is now capable of carrying out significant actions [i.e., terrorist attacks]" (Al-Alam TV, January 26).

Stabbing North of Jerusalem

■ On January 26 during a border police patrol in the Atarot industrial zone near Jerusalem a border policeman was stabbed and seriously wounded by a terrorist. The patrol stopped near the terrorist for a routine check and the terrorist drew out a knife and stabbed the policeman. He then tried to stab a female policeman, but the patrol's commander shot and critically wounded him. The wounded policeman and the terrorist were evacuated to hospitals.

The Murderers of Rubin and Amihai Sentenced to 15 Years in Jail

■ A Palestinian military court sentenced the two terrorists who murdered off-duty IDF soldiers David Rubin and Ahikam Amihai on December 28 to 15 years in jail (Ma'an News Agency, January 22). The two murderers surrendered to Palestinian general intelligence on the day of the attack, fearing they would be captured by the Israeli security forces¹.



The two off-duty IDF soldiers murdered during a field trip near Hebron (IDF Spokesman, December 29).

■ Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum denounced the terrorists' trial, calling it "a public betrayal of the history of the jihad and the honorable resistance [i.e., terrorism] of the Palestinian people" (Palestine-info Website, January 23).

¹ For further information see our January 3 Bulletin entitled "Shooting attack near Hebron, December 28, 2007: The Israel Security Agency revealed that the attack was carried out by Fatah operatives linked to the Palestinian security services" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_020108e.htm.

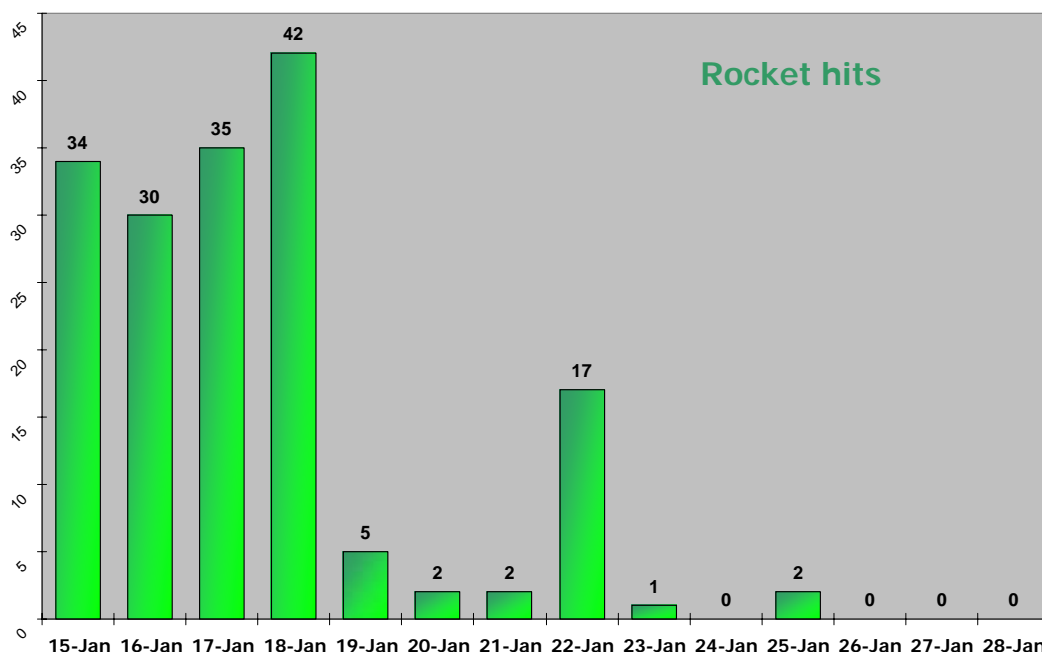
Rocket and Mortar Fire

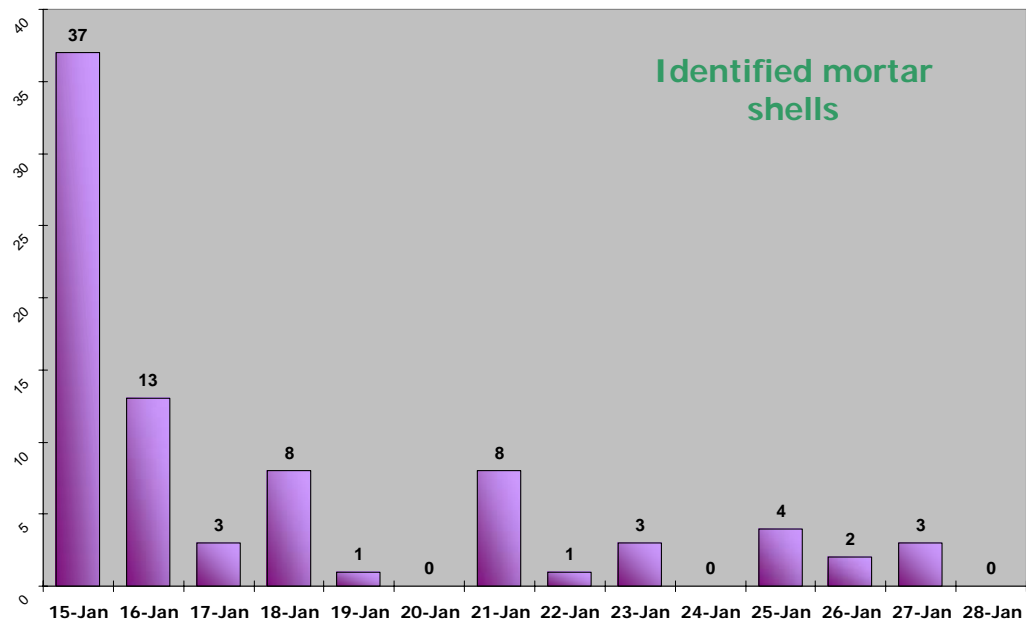
■ During the past week a substantial drop was recorded in rocket fire into Israeli territory. There were 20 identified rocket hits, a decline since January 19 to the level of isolated daily hits (with the exception of a sharp increase on January 22), and in the last few days stopping completely. That happened after 30-40 daily hits during the Hamas rocket attack of January 15-18. After the rocket attack Hamas returned to its former position of abstaining from direct involvement.

■ There was also a sharp drop in the number of mortar shells fired at IDF forces operating in the Gaza Strip and at IDF posts and Israeli kibbutzim and moshavim near the border fence. Thirteen mortar shell hits were identified during the past week compared with 70 the week before. Hamas continues to claim responsibility for the mortar shell fire.

■ In a meeting with the Dutch foreign minister, Abu Mazen denounced the rocket fire as “useless” and said that it had to stop (Palestinian TV, January 22). Fawzi Barhoum, Hamas spokesman, said Abu Mazen’s statement was “heresy and a denial of the Palestinian’s people’s right to legitimate resistance...” (Palestine-info Website, January 22). Khaled Mashal referred to the rockets saying that “we want to unite our internal front because we are all in the crosshairs of Zionist aggression. The Palestinian rockets are a response to aggression and the occupation...The resistance is the means and not the end” (Al-Arabiya TV, January 22).

Identified Rocket and Mortar Shell Hits During the Past Week





Counterterrorist Activities

Continued Counterterrorist Activities in the Gaza Strip

- In the wake of the escalation in the Gaza Strip the IDF returned to its “routine” counterterrorist activities:
 - **January 27:** The Israeli Air Force attacked a Hamas building in Rafah. According to Palestinian reports four Palestinians were injured.
 - **January 25:** The IAF attacked a vehicle in Rafah carrying a number of terrorists. According to Palestinian media reports it was a Hamas truck carrying explosives.
 - **January 25:** The IAF hit another vehicle in Rafah carrying Hamas terrorist operatives. Three Hamas terrorists were killed, one of them a senior Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades operative. The organization announced that two of those killed were involved in firing rockets into Israeli territory (Al-Qassam Website, January 25).
 - **January 22:** IDF counterterrorist activity led to an exchange of fire with three terrorist operatives near the Sufa Crossing. One was killed. A search of the area revealed communication equipment and ropes.

Judea and Samaria

- Ongoing counterterrorist activities continued in Judea and Samaria. The Israeli security forces detained a large number of wanted Palestinians and located quantities of materials which could be used in the manufacture of explosives and rockets.



On January 22 materials were seized in two factories east of Nablus during routine IDF activities. The unauthorized materials can be used to manufacture explosives and rockets (IDF Spokesman's Website, January 22).

The Gaza Strip Crossing

The crossings into Israel

- Since January 22 passage through the Nahal Oz Crossing has been **restricted** to fuel and cooking gas. The Erez Crossing is open for urgent humanitarian cases and the passage of urgent humanitarian commodities.

- Following the restricted provision of diesel fuel and gas from Israel to the Gaza Strip as of January 22, the Gazans have put their power station into operation. At the same time Hassan Yunis, Egyptian minister of electricity and energy, said that Egypt had increased the amount of electricity it was sending to the Gaza Strip and that they were examining the possibility of connecting it to the project of the electric grid common to seven Arab states (Al-Ahram, January 23).

■ Following the appeal filed with the Israeli Supreme Court, on January 27 the State Advocacy answered that the supply of fuel to the Gaza Strip would be renewed to its status before the sanctions were intensified after the massive rocket attack against Israel. However, the state answered that if the rocket attacks continued, it would consider limiting supplies again (Ynet, January 27). In effect, fuel supplies were renewed to the power station and for public vehicles such as ambulances. In addition, the passage of cooking gas, diesel fuel and gasoline continues, although the amounts are restricted.

Breaking through the Border into Egypt²

■ The escalation of Hamas's attacks against Israel and the lack of fuel and basic commodities following the closure of the Gaza Strip crossings were exploited by Hamas to exert pressure on Egypt. The objective was to open the Rafah Crossing under Hamas control and to cancel the Crossings Agreement of August 2005. Hamas used the Gazan population to carry out protest demonstrations and breach the fence between Egypt and the Gaza Strip in a number of spots. Once the fence was down, hundreds of thousands of Gazans rushed into Egyptian Rafah in an uncontrolled stream which has continued for seven days.



Crowds of people and vehicles streaming through the breached Rafah Crossing (Al-Aqsa TV, January 24).

■ The Egyptians, who avoided confrontations with Hamas and even sent reinforcements to the area, did not find an effective response to the new situation created along the border. Politically, the Egyptians are trying to mediate between Hamas and Abu Mazen to find an internal Palestinian solution which will make it possible to reopen the Rafah Crossing on a basis different from the Crossings Agreement. According to Salam Fayyad, there is an Arab and international consensus to the effect that the Palestinian Authority should manage the crossings, while Hamas heads are extremely critical of the decision and insist that the situation not return to the status quo ante. In our assessment, any solution reached will mean Hamas control of the crossing into Egypt, the Gaza Strip's "oxygen tube."

² For further information see our January 29 Bulletin entitled "With the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Egypt breached, Hamas and other terrorist organizations can freely smuggle operatives and weapons into the Gaza Strip and dispatch terrorists to Israel through Sinai. The Egyptians are looking for a solution but Hamas does not intend to give up its achievement" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_290108e.htm and http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ct_290108e.pdf.

■ On the afternoon of January 28 reinforced Egyptian security forces in collaboration with armed Hamas operatives began closing off the breaches in the fence and stopping the flow of cars crossing the border. Because of that and the wintery weather, during the past two days fewer Palestinians have crossed the border. In the Gaza Strip it is commonly thought that by the end of the week the mass flow of Gazans into Egypt will stop (Al-Jazeera TV, January 28).

■ As far as Israel is concerned, the situation created is a clear and present security threat. A breached border fence and the possibility of a reopened Rafah Crossing under Hamas control enable the terrorist organizations to keep up a steady stream of weapons and operatives into the Gaza Strip (including global jihad operatives, who have easy access to weapons and supporters in the Sinai Peninsula). In addition, it will be relatively easy for the terrorist organizations to dispatch squads into Israel through the wide-open Israel-Egyptian border from the Gaza Strip to Eilat.

Hamas's propaganda campaign continues

■ At the same time, Hamas continues organizing protests against Israel's closure of the crossings. It organized a demonstration using children wearing shrouds who waved the flags of Arab and Islamic countries and appealed to them to "lift the blockade" (PalMedia Website, January 29).



Palestinian children dressed in shrouds demonstrate for the opening of the crossings (Reuters, January 28).

The Annapolis Process

Olmert and Abu Mazen Meet

■ Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and PA Chairman Abu Mazen met in Jerusalem on January 27. The focus of the meeting was the issue of the breach of the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, especially the Rafah Crossing (Ynet, January 27). The Palestinian media reported that Abu Mazen was supposed to ask for the raising of the blockade of the Gaza Strip and for Israel to agree to let the PA control the crossings (Al-Ayyam, January 26). In practical terms, the PA cannot effectively supervise the crossings between the Gaza Strip and Israel and Egypt.

■ Hamas denounced the meeting, claiming that it was an attempt to evade an internal Palestinian dialogue. The secretary of the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, Musheir al-Masri, called the meeting “Abu Mazen’s attempt to enlist Israel’s support for his refusal to dialogue with Hamas and to sabotage President Mubarak’s call for a dialogue between Hamas and Fatah (Palestine-info Website, January 27).

The Meeting of Peace Rejectionists in Damascus

■ On January 23-25 the peace process rejectionists met in Damascus. It was supposed to have taken place at the same time as the Annapolis meeting but did not because Syria participated in Annapolis. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Palestinian terrorist organizations, among them Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others. Representatives from Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Egypt took part in the opening ceremonies (Palestine-info Website, January 24). Fatah boycotted the meeting, viewing it as an attempt to undermine the PLO’s authority and as a factor in widening the internal Palestinian schism (Al-Youm, January 22).



The meeting’s opening ceremonies. At the center is Syrian information minister Muhsin Bilal (Al-Aqsa TV, January 23).

■ **Khaled Mashal** said that “the objective of the meeting is not to redefine the PLO or split it, not because we couldn’t do that, but because under the current circumstances we are not interested in pouring oil on the fire” (Al-Akhbar, January 25). **Musa Abu Marzuq**, his deputy, said that the objective was to send a message to all Palestinians that “all the Palestinian people’s options are open, **especially the option of resistance**” (Al-Alam TV, January 23).

■ The closing statement of the meeting was severely critical of the PA (“the Oslo group”) and that it “is not authorized to speak for the Palestinian people either in the territories or the dispersion [beyond Palestine].” The statement also condemned the policies of the PA and its security forces against the “resistance” (i.e., the terrorist organizations), and rejected any step intended to settle the refugees in the countries where they currently live (Agence France Presse, January 25).



The meeting's closing statement
(Al-Alam TV, January 25).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Activities of the PA's security forces

■ The activities of the Palestinian security forces against Hamas and the PIJ continue. Last week they suppressed rallies organized in cities in Judea and Samaria by those organizations to identify with the Gaza Strip. They also detained PIJ operatives in the Jenin region (Palestine-info Website, January 26). At the same time, they operated in the area around Qalqilya to locate wanted operatives (Palestine-info Website, January 26). Their activities do not seriously affect the operative networks of the various terrorist organizations, **which continue their attacks against Israeli targets in Judea and Samaria.**