**Explosives hurled at IDF troops guarding Jewish worshipers in Nablus**

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A Palestinian hurled explosives at Israeli soldiers protecting a crowd of Jewish worshipers in the West Bank city of Nablus overnight Wednesday-Thursday, causing no injuries or damage, the army said.

A thousand Jewish worshipers flocked in the early hours of Thursday to Joseph’s Tomb for Passover prayers under military escort.

In a statement, the military said that before the worshipers entered the site, observations indicated “suspicious activity” in addition to the explosives that were hurled. Soldiers arrested three suspects and found weapons, including rifle magazines, bullets and a knife on a nearby roof.

The worshipers, who included the head of the Shomron Regional Council Yossi Dagan, prayed, sang and danced at Joseph’s Tomb, believed to be the burial site of the biblical figure.

The Shomron Regional Council said in a statement that the new head of the IDF Central Command, Nadav Padan, also came and toured the site.

After the festive prayer was over, Palestinian residents began a “violent riot” at the exit from the city, the army said, adding that troops employed riot control methods to disperse the crowd. Two Palestinians were said to have been injured.

Pilgrimages by Israeli or foreign civilians to the Joseph’s Tomb holy site are frequent catalysts for violence. In the past, Nablus residents have attacked the groups visiting the site with rocks, Molotov cocktails and rifle fire.

As a result, those interested in visiting the site require a military escort.

In January, army sappers detonated a cellphone-operated explosive device that was apparently planted by Palestinians at the entrance to Joseph’s Tomb ahead of a similar arrival of Jewish worshipers. There were no injuries or significant damage caused by the controlled blast, and the pilgrimage to the shrine continued as planned, an Israel Defense Forces spokesperson said.

The left-wing B’Tselem rights group has condemned the routine pilgrimage, saying that “Israel has preferred the interest of Jewish worshipers over the rights of the Palestinian residents, their security, their safety and their daily routine.”

In August, two Palestinians were shot and wounded by Israeli troops who were providing protection to Jewish worshipers visiting Joseph’s Tomb.

In October 2015, Palestinian rioters set fire to the holy site. It was restored and reopened a few weeks later.