



November 20, 2012

Operation Pillar of Defense – Update No. 4 Terrorist Organizations Use Foreign Media Facilities for Camouflage and Protection



Car belonging to senior Hamas operative Muhammad Riad Shamlakh marked "TV" (Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV, November 19, 2012).

Overview

1. During the past 24 hours two instances were exposed of terrorist operatives' using the vehicles and buildings of foreign media in the Gaza Strip for purposes of camouflage and protection. In one instance a senior Hamas operative drove a **vehicle with "TV" painted on the hood** to keep Israeli Air Force aircraft from striking it. In another, **senior terrorist operatives of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** located themselves on the second floor of the building in the Gaza Strip where the offices of the foreign news agencies are located; the modus operandi was used by terrorist operatives in the Gaza Strip in the past.

Examples from Operation Pillar of Defense

Terrorist's Car Camouflaged as Media Vehicle

2. On **November 19** the car of senior Hamas terrorist operative **Muhammad Shamlakh** was struck by the IDF. He was responsible for operating Hamas force in the southern Gaza Strip. **His car bore press insignia and had "TV" painted on its hood** (IDF Spokesman, November 19, 2012). The Hamas media reported that in Tel al-Islam (in the southern part of Gaza City), the IDF struck a civilian vehicle belonging to the media, killing one and wounding several (Hamas' Al-Aqsa forum, November 19, 2012). The Hamas media did not relate to Muhammad Shamlakh and his use of a press vehicle.

Terrorist Hideout Situated in Media Building

3. On the afternoon of **November 19** the IDF struck a hideout used by senior operatives of the **PIJ's rocket network**. **The operatives hid on the second floor of the Al-Shorouq Tower in the Rimal section in the heart of Gaza City. The building houses the offices of Western and Arabic news agencies and television channels** (IDF Spokesman, November 19, 2012).

4. In the hideout in the Al-Shorouq Tower were at the time (IDF Spokesman, November 19, 2012):

1) **Bha'a Abu al-Ata**, commander of the **PIJ's** Gaza City brigade and a member of the organization's supreme military council. He had been involved in planning and carrying out rocket and other terrorist attacks on Israel.

2) **Taysir Mahmoud Muhammad Jaabari**, a senior PIJ operative, resident of Sajaiya, a member of the organization's supreme military council and holding it operations portfolio. In the past he commanded the Gaza brigade and was involved in firing rockets and planning terrorist attacks on Israel.

3) **Khalil Bahatini**, a senior figure in implementing the organization's military buildup and head of its preventive security apparatus. He was a pivotal figure in the organization's long-range rocket wing.

4) **Ramez Kharb**, a senior figure in the PIJ's military-terrorist wing. He held the propaganda portfolio in the Gaza City brigade, and in the past commanded it.



The second IDF attack on the Al-Shorouq Tower [where PIJ operatives hid] (Paltimes.net website, November 19, 2012).

Similar Methods Used in the Past

5. This was not the first time terrorist operatives used media vehicles as camouflage, including using them to carry out terrorist attacks. On June 9, 2007, a four-man squad of PIJ and Fatah terrorist operatives attacked an IDF post and patrol near the Kissufim crossing. The terrorists drove in a jeep camouflaged as a media vehicle and broke through the gate, entering Israeli territory. IDF forces arrived at the site and exchanged fire with the terrorists, killing one; three fled the scene.



The jeep, marked "Press" and "TV" used by the terrorist squad to drive to the site of the attack
(Photo courtesy of Maor Azoulai and Yedioth Aharonoth, June 2007).

6. In addition, terrorist exploitation of buildings used by foreign media is also familiar. During Operation Cast Lead (December 2008-January 2009), **Hanan al-Masri**, a correspondent for Al-Arabiya TV who worked in its offices in the Al-Shorouq Tower, **reported the launching of a Grad rocket into Israeli territory from beneath the building.** She reported hearing a very loud noise which she thought was an Israeli Air Force attack. However, she later learned that the noise had been made by the firing of a 122mm Grad rocket, **launched from beneath the building.**¹



Al-Arabiya correspondent reports a rocket launch
"The rocket that was just launched was a Grad?"

¹ For further information see the January 19, 2009 bulletin ["Using civilians as human shields: launching rockets at Israel from locations close to buildings and schools."](#)

7. As part of the lessons learned by Hamas from Operation Cast Lead and plans to be implemented in the next round of fighting, there were ideas and recommendations for improving the tactics of embedding operatives within the civilian population. At the time, reliable information indicated that one of the recommendations was **to use non-military vehicles which would be camouflaged as civilian vehicles as belonging to foreign institutions, ambulances, press cars, commercial vans with industrial logos, taxis, etc.**²

² For further information about Hamas' lessons how the terrorist organizations use civilian facilities and vehicles for operational purposes see the March 2010 ITIC study "[Hamas and the Terrorist Threat from the Gaza Strip. The Main Findings of the Goldstone Report Versus the Factual Findings.](#)"