



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

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

February 12-19, 2008



**A rocket hit in the center of Kibbutz Nir Am (near Sderot)
(Alex Zeger for the Sderot Media Center, February 18)**

Overview

- Rocket and mortar shell fire targeting western Negev towns and villages continued this past week. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for most of the fire deeper into Israel territory, while Hamas focused on shelling IDF counterterrorist activity forces in the Gaza Strip and targets close to the security fence. In Judea and Samaria there was an increase in stabbings, shootings, rock throwing and Molotov cocktails.
- On February 12 Imad Moughnieh, mastermind Hezbollah terrorist operative, was killed in Damascus by a bomb planted in his car. He was a key figure in constructing Hezbollah's military infrastructure in Lebanon and in operating the organization's terrorist networks abroad. Hezbollah was quick to accuse Israel, which rejected the implication of any involvement in the event. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah threatened to wage an "open war" against Israel, i.e., a war without borders beyond the Lebanese-Israeli arena.

Important Events

Rocket Fire from the Gaza Strip

■ During the past week the terrorist organizations continued firing rockets at western Negev towns and villages. **Forty-five rocket hits** were identified compared with 66 the previous week. Most of the responsibility for rocket fire was claimed by the PIJ and PRC. The terrorist organizations claimed that the rockets fired on February 15 and 16 were in retaliation for the death of a senior PIJ terrorist operative whom they falsely claimed Israel had killed (See below). In addition, about **40 mortar shells** were fired at IDF forces and towns and villages near the Gaza Strip border.

■ Hamas continues to claim responsibility for rocket and mortar shell fire, but its statements assert that the attacks target IDF forces operating inside the Gaza Strip and IDF posts near the border fence. On February 12 Hamas claimed responsibility for firing 70 mortar shells and five rockets at IDF forces operating in the Al-Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza Strip and at the post at Kibbutz Nahal Oz (actually only 15 mortar shells were fired on February 12).

■ While the terrorist organizations continue rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, Palestinian Authority chairman Abu Mazen again issued a denunciation of the attacks, saying they were “unhelpful.” He claimed that the rocket fire caused European projects being carried out in the PA to be delayed and postponed (Palestinian TV, February 15).

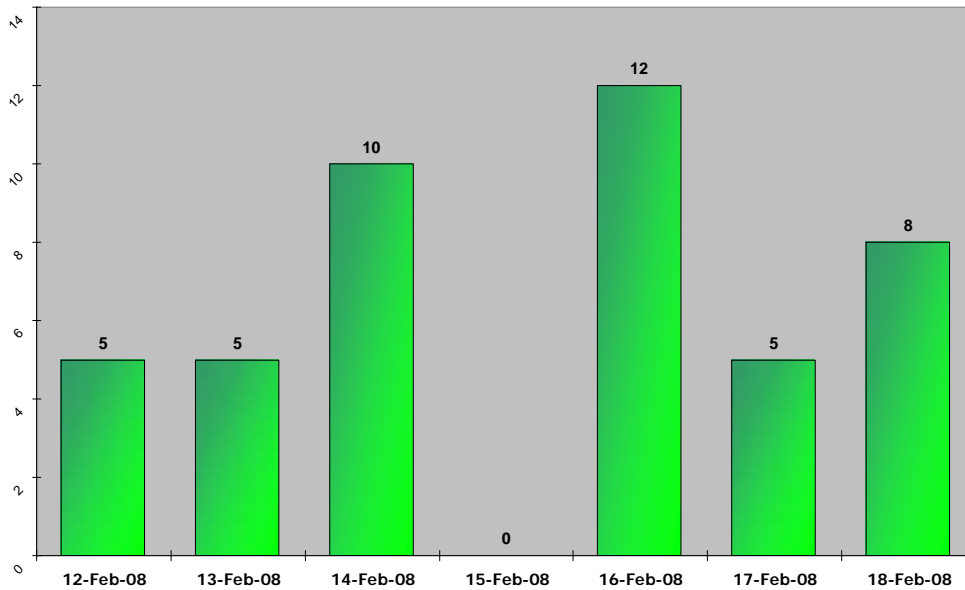


Launching mortar shells: the trip wire which launches the shell is visible at the right
(Al-Aqsa TV, February 12).



A rocket which hit the yard of a house in Sderot on February 17 sent five people into shock and damaged the building
(Noam Badin for the Sderot Media Center, February 17).

Rocket Fire during the Past Week



An increase in stabbings, shootings, and rock and Molotov cocktail-throwing in Judea and Samaria

■ Many stabbings were recently prevented in Judea and Samaria. In addition, there has been an increase in rock and Molotov cocktail-throwing:

- **On February 15** an Israeli woman was slightly injured and two vehicles were damaged by four Molotov cocktails near the village of Azoun (east of Qalqilya). On the same day stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles near the village of Al-Aroub, south of Bethlehem. No one was injured but a vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 15).



Knives found in a terrorist's possession (IDF Spokesman, February 12).

- **On February 14** a charge and eight Molotov cocktails were thrown at an IDF force during an action in the village of Anabta, east of Tulkarm. There were no injuries but a vehicle was damaged. The force identified the Palestinian who had thrown the charge, shot and hit him (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 14).
- **On February 12** an IDF soldier was stabbed in the neck by a terrorist. The attack occurred at a roadblock near the village of Aja, south of Jenin. The soldiers at the

roadblock overcame the terrorist, detained him and took him to the security forces for interrogation (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 12).

Shots Fired at an Israeli Bus

■ On February 17 terrorists opened fire on an Israeli bus near the Hawara roadblock, south of Nablus. Fatah/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack (the faction calling itself the **Martyr Imad Moughnieh's Squads**). The announcement stated that the attack was in retaliation for the killing of Hezbollah terrorist Imad Moughnieh, and that there would be other attacks (Ma'an News Agency, February 17).

Counterterrorist Activities

The Gaza Strip

The IDF Continues Counterterrorist Activities in the Gaza Strip

■ The IDF continued its counterterrorist activities along the Gaza Strip border fence and within the Strip:

- **February 17:** During an exchange of fire between armed terrorists and IDF forces in the southern Gaza strip **an IDF soldier was critically wounded** (IDF Spokesman). During the action the Israeli Air Force attacked armed terrorists who were near the IDF force, killing a number of terrorists belonging to the operative wings of Hamas and the PRC.
- **February 14:** The IDF carried out a counterterrorist action near the Erez industrial zone, destroying 20 structures which had been used by the terrorist organizations for attacks against IDF forces. During the action terrorists fired a mortar shell at the soldiers; there were no injuries.

The Fortification of Sderot and the Towns and Villages near the Gaza Strip

■ Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert recently spoke about fortifying Sderot and the towns and villages close to the Gaza Strip, saying that the Israeli government had four main political guidelines for dealing with terrorist attacks coming from the Gaza Strip: 1) Pin-pointed,

intensive attacks against the focal points of terrorism; 2) Providing a response in the form of active defense against rockets, part of which was the development of a missile defense system called the "iron dome"; 3) Official sanctions imposed on the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip; 4) The (partial) fortification of Sderot and the towns and villages around the Gaza Strip (Prime Minister's Website, February 17).

■ **Regarding the policy of fortification**, in accordance with the decision made by a professional team belonging to the prime minister's office which had deliberated with the relevant bodies, a recommendation was made **to fortify houses lying less than 4.5 kilometers from the Gaza Strip** (2.8 miles) and most vulnerable to rocket and mortar shell attacks. That was recommended on the assumption that in the future the "iron dome" defense system (which is still being developed) will provide a solution for rocket fire within that range (Prime Minister's Website, February 17).

■ That means that **3,600 houses in Sderot and the towns and villages close to the Gaza Strip will be fortified during the first stage and 4,400 more during the second stage** (Yediot Ha'aharonot, February 18). On February 19 General Yair Golan, Home Front Commander, presented the fortification program for the Knesset's State Control Committee. According to the plan, the first stage will cost about 350 million shekels (almost \$100 million) (Ynet, February 18).

Judea and Samaria

Fatah-Tanzim Operative Detained

■ On February 12 a Fatah-Tanzim operative was detained in the village of Qadoum. He was suspected of involvement in a shooting which took place in September 2007 near Karnei Shomron (east of Qalqilya) and wounded two Israeli civilians (IDF Spokesman's Website, February 12).

The Lebanese Arena

Imad Moughnieh, No. 2 at Hezbollah, killed in Damascus¹

■ At about 22:00 (10 p.m.) on February 12 a car blew up in the Soussa residential neighborhood in Damascus, killing a mastermind Hezbollah terrorist. The following morning Hezbollah officially announced the death of Imad Moughnieh and blamed Israel (Al-Manar TV, February 13). An official statement issued by the Israeli Prime Minister's media advisor on February 13 said that Israel was examining the reports from Lebanon and Syria regarding Moughnieh's death and making an initial study of the details available in the media. The statement noted unequivocally **that Israel rejected the attempts of terrorist elements to implicate in any way in the event.**



Imad Moughnieh (Al-Manar TV, February 14)

■ Hajj Imad Moughnieh was Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's right-hand man and considered the organization's No. 2 figure. He was viewed as playing a key role in building and operating Hezbollah's military infrastructure in Lebanon, while at the same time he was responsible for the organization's terrorist attacks in Lebanon and abroad. His activities included hijacking planes, abducting Western diplomats, blowing up the American Embassy in Beirut, blowing up the Israeli Embassy and Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, and more. In a bellicose speech given by Hassan Nasrallah before Moughnieh's funeral procession set out, he

¹ For further information see our February 13 and 18 Bulletin entitled "Imad Faye Moughnieh, No. 2 at Hezbollah and responsible for its military and terrorist operations in Lebanon and abroad, died when his car exploded in Damascus" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_130208e.htm and "Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah threatened revenge for the killing of Imad Moughnieh by declaring an "open war" on Israel," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_180208e.htm.

announced an “open war” with Israel, that is, a war without borders and going beyond the Lebanese-Israeli arena, and not limited by time or place.



Identification with Imad Moughnieh and turning him into a role model for the Palestinian terrorist organizations: a PIJ poster linking the killing of Moughnieh to that of a PIJ terrorist in Lebanon in May 2006 (Qudsnet Website, February 19).

The Gaza Strip Crossings

The Crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

- The Nahal Oz Crossing remains open for the transfer of fuel and cooking gas. The Erez Crossing is open for medical emergencies and humanitarian supplies, which continue to arrive from the organizations active in the Gaza Strip.

The Crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip

- On February 14 the first meeting was held between the joint Egyptian-Hamas committee concerning arrangements for movement through the Rafah Crossing. The Hamas side of the committee is headed by Omad Mahmoud al-Zahar, and the Egyptian by General Mohammed Ibrahim. A number of topics were discussed, among them inspection of the Rafah Crossing, supplies, electricity and fuel for the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian detainees in Egypt. The lull in

the fighting with Israel was also discussed, as was the issue of the release of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit (Palestine-info Website, February 15).

■ On February 18 the Egyptians opened the Salah al-Din Gate near the Rafah Crossing in coordination with the Hamas police. Egypt allowed 350 Palestinians who were delayed on its territory to enter the Gaza Strip. According to Egyptian “security sources” there are still 2,500 Palestinians staying with relatives in the northern Sinai peninsula (Reuters, February 18).



Palestinians delayed in Egypt returning to the Gaza Strip (Al-Aqsa TV, February 18).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Senior PIJ terrorist killed in “work accident” in the Gaza Strip

■ On the evening of February 15 an explosion occurred in the home of PIJ senior operator **Ayman al-Fayed** in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. According to Palestinian media reports nine Palestinians died in the blast, including al-Fayed, his wife and daughters; dozens of civilians were injured. At first the Palestinian media reported that the blast had been caused by a “work accident,” but later, as usual, the finger of guilt was pointed at Israel. In response **the IDF Spokesman said that the IDF had no involvement in the incident**. The Palestinian terrorist organizations generally accuse Israel of responsibility for “work accidents” which harm the civilian population living in close proximity to weapons storehouses, explosives laboratories and workshops for the manufacture of weapons.

■ Following the explosion Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum called for “missile attacks against Sderot, Ashqelon and Tel Aviv,”** adding that **“the war must remain borderless, it must be a new war, the missiles have to be new missiles, unconventional, [used] until we stop the aggression...”** (Al-Aqsa TV, February 15). He opposed Abu Mazen, saying that “he should be ashamed to face these martyrs” and should cut off relations with Israel. He also said that Israel should **“bear the responsibility for the responses of the factions of the resistance [i.e., terrorist organizations]”** (Filastin al-An Website, February 16).

■ Two Palestinian human rights organizations, The Palestinian Center for Human Rights and the Al-Mizan Center have **cast doubts on the claims that the explosion was the result of an Israeli attack**. Both organizations stated that eye witnesses said they saw fire and smoke rising from Ayman Al-Fayed's house a few minutes before the explosion, indicating that it was internal and similar to many others in the past. The organizations called for a serious, comprehensive investigation of the incident, which killed and wounded many civilians (Ma'an News Agency, February 18).

Christian Institute in Gaza Attacked Again

■ Before dawn on February 15 a number of armed men, some of them masked, broke into the YMCA library in Gaza City. They abducted two guards, stole a computer and car, and exploded a bomb which completely destroyed the library building and burned the books (Ma'an News Agency, February 15). A spokesman for Abu Mazen deplored the attack, saying the institute had served many of Gaza City's residents for decades (Wafa News Agency, February 15). Hamas also denounced the attack and said that those behind it served Israel.

■ **During the past year attacks on Christian figures and institutions in the Gaza Strip identified with Western culture increased**, carried out by groups affiliated with the global jihad or radical Islam. For example, during President Bush's visit to the region (January 9-11, 2008) the American International School in Beit Lahia (in the northern Gaza Strip) was attacked twice.² Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, generally publicly condemns attacks on Christians, **but in practice does not take effective steps against those who carry them out**.

² For further information see our January 14 Bulletin entitled "The "Army of the Believers—the Al-Qaeda Organization in Palestine" has claimed responsibility for two attacks on the American International School in Gaza" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/al_qaeda_e.htm.