



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
Israel Intelligence Heritage
and Commemoration Center

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation

June 3-10, 2008



A mortar shell hits a factory on Kibbutz Nir Oz, killing Amnon Rosenberg (The Israel Project, June 5, 2008).



Abu Mazen calling for a dialogue between Fatah and Hamas (Al-Ayyam, June 5, 2008).

Overview

- This past week intensive rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip continued. A 120mm mortar shell hit a factory on Kibbutz Nir Oz, killing Amnon Rosenberg from Kibbutz Nirim. There was also an increase in small arms fire at IDF soldiers and civilians near the security fence around the Gaza Strip.
- Israel's political and security leadership is currently deliberating the Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting to decide whether to accept the lull or to carry out a broad military action in the Gaza Strip.
- Abu Mazen gave a speech to mark the 41st anniversary of the Six Day War, calling upon Hamas to engage in a national dialogue and to return the Gaza Strip to the status quo before Hamas's military takeover. Hamas accepted his initiative but the basic disagreements between Hamas and Fatah still exist. Abu Mazen left for Saudi Arabia and Egypt to market his initiative and is expected to visit other Arab countries.

Important Events

Increase in mortar shell fire

■ During the past week intensive mortar shell fire targeting IDF forces and villages near the Gaza Strip continued. Thirty-nine mortar shells were fired, compared with 44 during the previous week. On June 5 one of the mortar shells hit the Nirlat building material factory on Kibbutz Nir Oz, killing **Amnon Rosenberg**, 51, a member of neighboring Kibbutz Nirim, and wounding four others, two of them critically. **Hamas** claimed responsibility for the attack on Nir Oz.



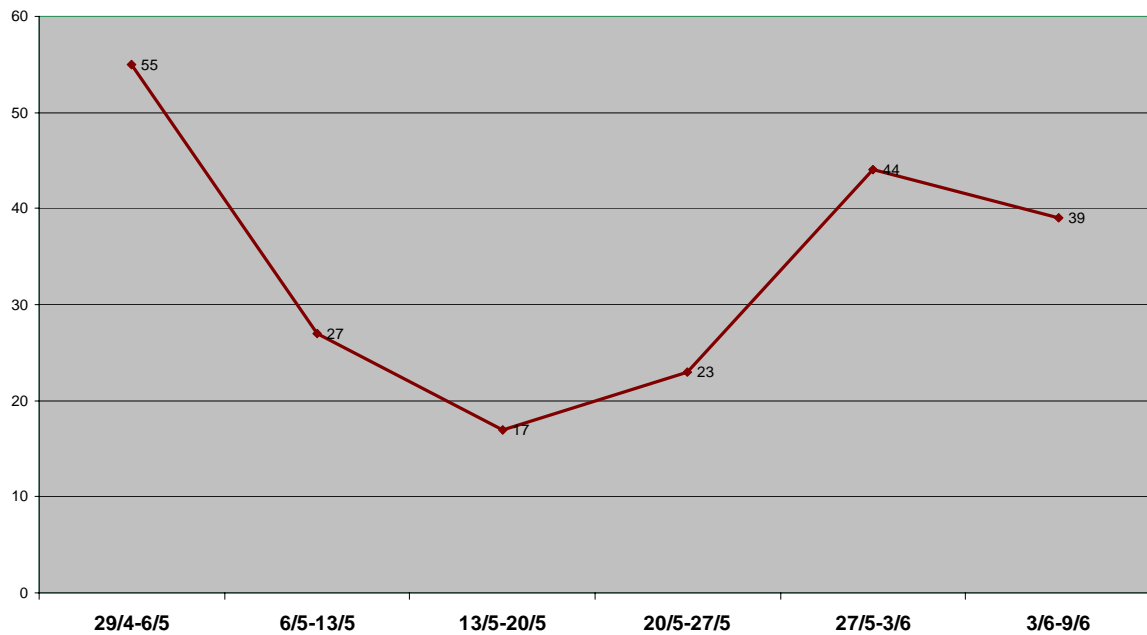
Amnon Rosenberg

■ On the afternoon of June 10 two barrages of 18 mortar shells were fired at Nahal Oz; there were no casualties. In response, the IDF attacked two squads of mortar shell launchers. Hamas claimed responsibility for the mortar shell attack and reported three killed and five wounded by the IDF.

■ In recent months **Hamas** and the other terrorist organizations have made intensive use of mortar shells to attack IDF forces and Israeli villages near the Gaza Strip. Since the beginning of 2008 there has been a **significant increase** in the extent of mortar shell fire compared with previous years, and it has been higher this year than any other. The use of standard 120mm mortar shells, apparently manufactured in Iran,¹ has **increased mortar shell fire range**, and the **hits are deadlier** than those of independently manufactured mortar shells.

¹ For further information about 120mm mortar shells see our April 9, 2008 Bulletin entitled "Hamas's military buildup in the Gaza Strip (Updated April 2008)" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_080408.pdf.

Mortar shell fire during the past six weeks



Rocket fire continues

- Extensive rocket fire into Israel continued. This past week there were 19 identified rocket hits, compared with 15 the previous week.

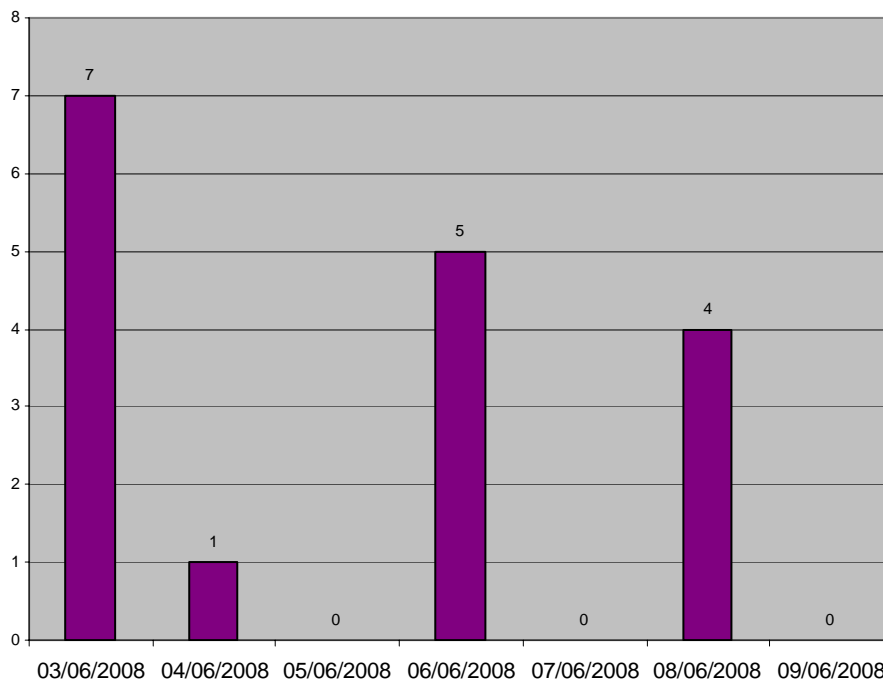


The Palestinian Islamic Jihad launches rockets into Israel (Al-Aqsa TV, June 4, 2008).

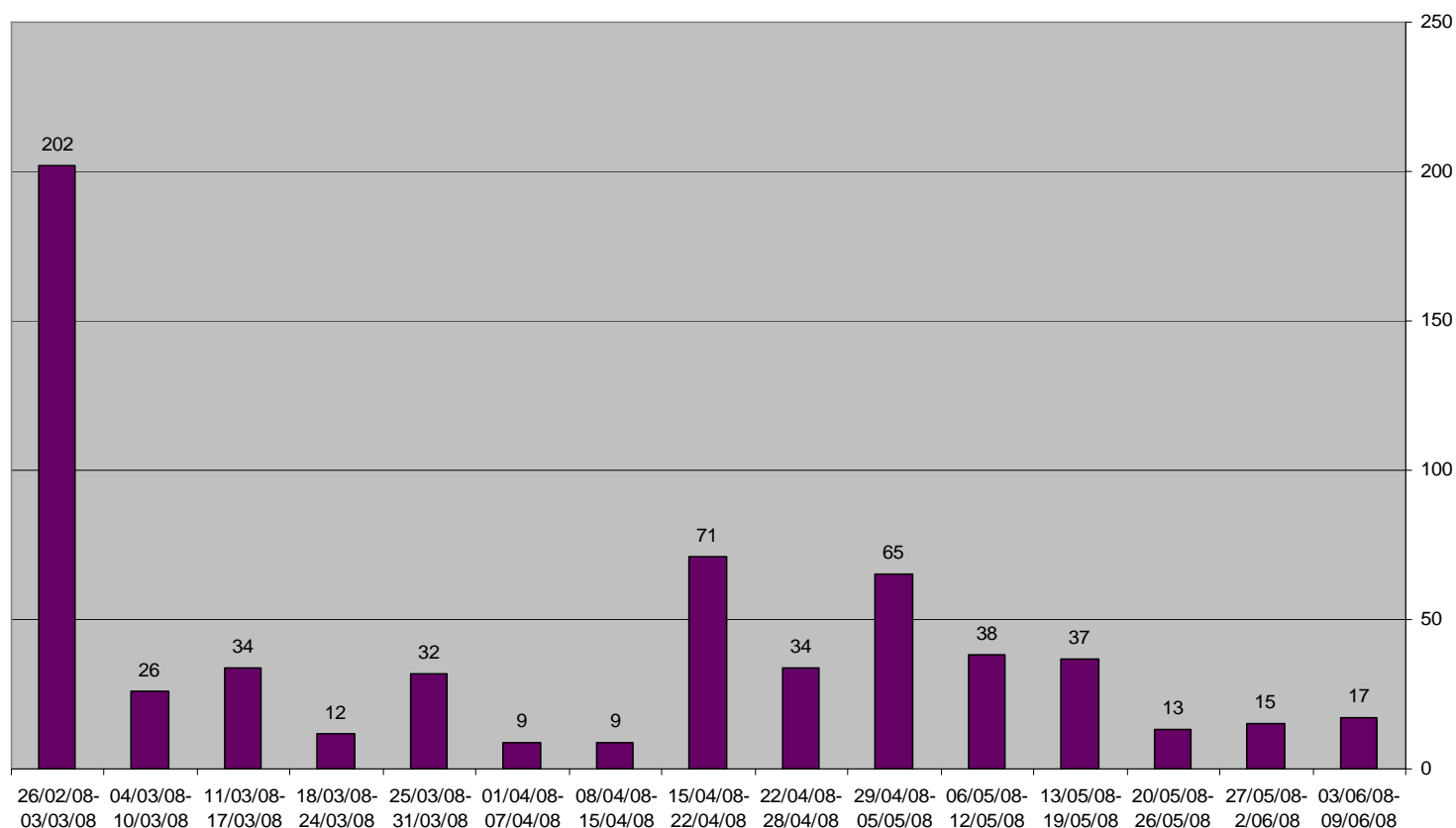
- On June 4 an errant rocket hit the Palestinian side of the fuel terminal at Nahal Oz in the central Gaza Strip, seriously wounding a worker of the Palestinian Fuel Authority in Gaza. Following the attack Israel closed the crossing for 24 hours. The wounded Palestinian was evacuated to Israel for medical treatment.

■ The attack at the fuel terminal was condemned by various elements in the Gaza Strip: **Mujahid Salameh**, head of the Fuel Authority, accused the rocket launchers of seeking to strangle the Gaza Strip and prevent fuel supplies from reaching it (Pal-Press, June 4). **Mahmoud al-Khazandar**, a senior member of the association of gas station owners, pleaded with the various terrorist organizations not turn the crossings into military targets for their actions (PalMedia Website, June 4). The Hamas administration's interior ministry condemned the incident and called those launching the attacks "irresponsible" (Interior ministry Website, June 4).

Daily Distribution of Identified Rocket Hits in Israel



Rocket Hits during the Past Week Compared with Previous Weeks



Fagot missile fired by Hamas for the first time

- On June 3, for the first time a Fagot guided missile was fired at IDF tanks. Its remains were found near the security fence. The missile is of Russian manufacture and can be controlled after being fired. Its maximum range is 2.5 kilometers (1.55 miles). Its existence in the Gaza Strip shows that the Palestinian terrorist organizations, especially Hamas, are doing their utmost to upgrade their anti-tank weapons, which are smuggled into the Strip. They serve as an important component in the fighting against the IDF, inspired by their successful use by Hezbollah (Hamas's role model) in the second Lebanon war.

Increase in small arms fire along the security fence around the Gaza Strip

- On June 6 an IDF soldier was seriously wounded by small arms fire as engineering work was being carried out along the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. On June 3, an IDF soldier was critically wounded by gunfire as engineering work was being carried out near the security fence in the central Gaza Strip.

- Both incidents were part of the trend toward an increase in small arms fire from the Gaza Strip targeting IDF forces and civilians near the fence. Since the beginning of June there have been more than seven instances of such fire (IDF Spokesman's Website, June 3 and 6).

Counterterrorist Activities

The Gaza Strip

- IDF forces continued their counterterrorist activities in the Gaza Strip. On June 8 IDF soldiers carrying out an action near the security fence in the southern Gaza strip found a rocket launcher ready for firing and three additional launchers from which rockets had already been fired into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesman, June 8).

Judea and Samaria

- On June 8 a Palestinian came to the Hawara checkpoint south of Nablus. A security check revealed six pipe charges, a full M-16 magazine and a bag of a substance suspected of being gun powder. The charges were detonated in a controlled explosion by Border Police demolition experts and the Palestinian was taken for questioning by the security forces (IDF Spokesman, June 8). It should be noted that on May 19 at the same checkpoint a Palestinian youth was found with an explosive belt composed of five pipe charges.



Pipe charges found in the possession of a Palestinian at the Hawara checkpoint (IDF Spokesman, June 8, 2008)

- On June 5 a security force action seized an Israeli truck carrying 1,300 liters (343 gallons) of sulfuric acid at the Eliahu crossing east of Qalqilya. Sulfuric acid is forbidden in Judea and Samaria because it is used in the manufacture of explosives (IDF Spokesman, June 5).

Israel and Hamas

The Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting

- The Israeli prime minister, defense minister and foreign minister met in Jerusalem on June 10 to discuss the Egyptian initiative for a lull in the fighting. The issue will also be discussed at the meeting of the political-security cabinet scheduled for June 11. Either Israel will accept the lull, despite its limitations, or a decision will be made to carry out a broad military action in the Gaza Strip.
- According to Haaretz correspondents Amos Harel and Bark Ravid on June 10, the Egyptian initiative has three stages: during the **first stage**, the Palestinian terrorist organizations will stop attacking Israel from the Gaza Strip and the IDF will refrain from attacking terrorists within the Strip. During the **second stage**, Israel will ease the restrictions on goods and merchandise going through the crossings between it and the Gaza Strip. During the **third stage**, if progress has been made, Israel will consider opening the Rafah Crossing. According to the article in Haaretz, Egypt promised that if Israel authorizes the opening of the Rafah Crossing, it will be possible to make significant progress regarding the release of Gilad Shalit, the Israel soldier abducted two years ago.
- In the meantime, Hamas spokesmen have repeatedly warned Israel of the results of a military action in the Gaza Strip. **Abu Obeida**, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades spokesman, said that the organizations had completed their preparations for a possible Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip and added that the IDF had “amazing surprises” waiting for it should it attack (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, June 8). **Ismail Radwan**, a senior Hamas figure, warned Israel of the results of any “adventure” in the Gaza Strip and called upon it to learn the lessons of the past (BBC, June 6).

Hamas transfers another letter from Gilad Shalit

- On June 9 the parents of Gilad Shalit received another letter from their son, a Hamas prisoner for two years. The letter was delivered through the Carter Center where it arrived by fax on the night of June 8. The Carter Center issued an announcement to the effect that “President Carter and his team will try to organize the delivery of an answer to Gilad from his parents in the near future.” Gilad’s father, Noam Shalit, told Haaretz that in the letter Gilad pleaded for his life and asked to be released as soon as possible (Haaretz, June 10).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Abu Mazen calls to Hamas to renew the dialogue with Fatah

■ On June 4 Abu Mazen gave a speech marking the 41st anniversary of the Six Day War in which he called upon Hamas to end the internal Palestinian schism and return to the status quo before June 13, 2007, the date of the Hamas military takeover of the Gaza Strip. He called for a “comprehensive national dialogue” to implement the Yemenite initiative,² as was decided by the Arab summit in Damascus. Abu Mazen noted that the results of the national dialogue, and its high point,

would be new elections for the presidency and the Palestinian Legislative Council (Wafa News Agency, June 4). On June 5 he announced his decision to set up a committee composed of members of the PLO’s executive committee and representatives of the various Palestinian factions and trends to supervise the implementation of his initiative for a national dialogue (Wafa News Agency, June 5).

■ Hamas was quick to congratulate Abu Mazen on his call for a renewed dialogue. Gaza Strip Hamas prime minister **Ismail Haniya** said that Hamas was willing to contribute to the dialogue’s success and be flexible. He called for the end of the mutual mud-slinging campaigns in the Palestinian media, saying that Hamas’s media had already received their instructions (Al-Aqsa TV, June 5).³ **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy head of Hamas’s political bureau, said that Hamas was “in favor of an unconditional dialogue”⁴ according to the Sanaa Declaration. He demanded that the next step be the immediate initiation of an internal Palestinian dialogue, either directly or under Arab aegis (Palestine-info Website, Damascus, June 5).

² On March 23 Fatah and Hamas signed a joint declaration (the Sanaa Declaration) after three days of talks in Yemen. The declaration called for a renewal of the dialogue between the two sides and a return of the status quo before the events in the Gaza Strip. The essential difference of opinion is that Hamas regards the declaration as the basis for a dialogue while Fatah regards it as the basis for implementation.

³ Hamas’s Al-Aqsa TV announced to the media that it intended to use its programs to create “a positive atmosphere which would serve the reconciliation,” and called upon the other Palestinian media to do the same (Filastin al-‘An Website, June 5). **Abdallah al-Afrangi**, a member of Fatah’s revolutionary council, said that Fatah was committed to stopping its propaganda campaign and its blame and invective against Hamas.

⁴ As noted above, an “unconditional dialogue” is the Hamas interpretation of the Sanaa Declaration. The Fatah interpretation (and the call made by Abu Mazen) is for the return of the status quo ante in the Gaza Strip as a condition for reconciliation.



Cartoon headed “The Palestinian Rapprochement.” Hamas on one side, the Fatah on the other, Israel, pictured as a stereotype Jew, squeezed in the middle (from Hamas’s newspaper Felesteen and the PIJ Pal-today Website, June 10, 2008).

■ Abu Mazen visited Saudi Arabia on June 8, where he met with King Abdallah, and Egypt on June 9, where he met with President Hosni Mubarak, to rally support for his initiative. According to a report in Al-Hayat on June 7, he would ask Cairo to host the national dialogue. He is expected to visit other Arab countries to present his initiative.



Egyptian President Mubarak and PA Chairman Abu Mazen (Al-Ayyam, June 10, 2008).