



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

September 15-22, 2009



Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas with George Mitchell (Wafa News Agency, September 16, 2009).



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with George Mitchell, special American envoy to the Middle East (Photo: Omar Awad for Reuters, September 16, 2009).

Overview

- Attacks continued in the western Negev, including rocket fire and shooting at IDF soldiers and civilians near the security fence. Since the beginning of August there has been a certain **increase** in the number of attacks, initiated by terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip which in many instances do not hesitate to publicly claim responsibility.
- After lengthy contacts between the United States, Israel and the Palestinians through American envoy George Mitchell, the United States announced there would be a tripartite meeting at the UN Building in New York; it took place on September 22. All the parties involved reduced their expectations regarding its outcome. Hamas has accused Mahmoud Abbas of joining forces with American President Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against the rights of the Palestinian people.

Important Events

Gaza Strip

Rocket and mortar shell fire, and shooting attacks

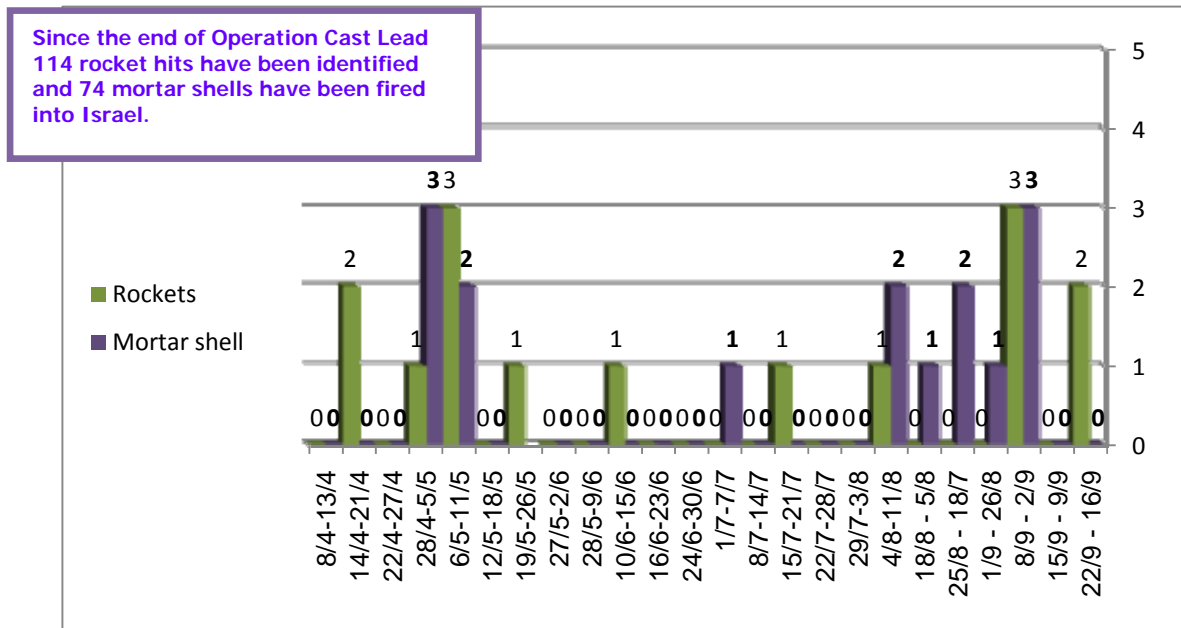
■ During the past week two rocket hits were identified in the western Negev and a mortar shell was fired at civilians working near the security fence. IDF patrols and Israeli civilians working near the security fence were also shot at, mostly with light arms. Since the beginning of August there has been a certain **increase** in the number of incidents initiated by the terrorist organizations, primarily targeting Israelis (soldiers and civilians) near the security fence. There have also been several instances in which the terrorist organizations have not hesitated to publicly claim responsibility for the attacks.

■ The most prominent attacks were the following:

- **September 16:** A mortar shell was fired at civilians working near the Kissufim IDF post. Responsibility was claimed by an organization affiliated with the global jihad calling itself "The Sunnah Supporters" (PalToday website, September 16, 2009).
- **September 19** (Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah): Two rocket hits were identified near the Israeli city of Sderot. There were no casualties and no damage was done. The Sunnah Supporters claimed responsibility (PalToday website, September 20, 2009).
- **September 20:** An IDF force shot at a terrorist squad planting IEDs southeast of Jabaliya, killing two terrorists and wounding three. The Palestinian media reported that one operative belonged to Hamas' military-terrorist wing and two to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Qudsnet website, September 20, 2009). Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum** issued a press release stating that Israel was exploiting "the Arab silence" and the support of Mahmoud Abbas' to attack Gazans during Eid al-Fitr (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, September 20, 2009).

■ **September 21:** Light arms were fired at Israeli civilians working near the Nahal Oz fuel terminal (IDF Spokesman, September 21, 2009). There were no casualties. Responsibility was claimed by the military-terrorist wing of the PFLP (PFLP military-terrorist wing website, September 21, 2009).

Rocket and mortar shell fire into Israeli territory since the end of Operation Cast Lead¹



Israeli Air Force attack

■ On September 19, in response to the rocket fire at the western Negev, Israeli Air Force planes bombed three smuggling tunnels in the Rafah area (IDF Spokesman, September 19, 2009). The Palestinian media claimed that one of the tunnels was located behind a school. There were no casualties but the tunnels were damaged, as were others nearby (Qudsnet website, September 20, 2009).

Judea and Samaria

East Jerusalem resident killed while trying to break through IDF roadblock

■ On September 22 IDF soldiers opened fire at a taxi driver who did not heed the order to halt at a roadblock southwest of Bethlehem. The soldiers shot and killed him. (IDF Spokesman, September 22, 2009). When the driver, an East Jerusalem resident, did not stop, an IDF jeep chased him into a nearby gas station. A soldier on reserve duty got out of the jeep and the taxi driver tried to run him over, causing minor injuries. The driver continued without stopping, and one of the soldier shot him; he later died of his wounds (Ynet, September 22, 2009).

Counterterrorism Activities

■ On September 16 the IDF, following orders from Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, began **the dismantling of 100 roadblocks in Judea and Samaria**. The order was intended to ease the movement of Palestinian civilians from rural areas toward the main traffic arteries in Judea and

¹ The statistics do not include the mortar shells fired at IDF soldiers patrolling the border fence which fell inside the Gaza Strip.

Samaria (IDF Spokesman, September 16, 2009). It is another step within the comprehensive Israeli policy of easing security measures for the Palestinian population.²

■ The Israeli security forces also continued their counterterrorism activities and detained Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities. During Rosh Hashanah, September 18-20, a complete closure was imposed on Judea and Samaria.

■ During the past week there were a number of attacks, primarily Molotov cocktails thrown at vehicles, as follows (IDF Spokesman):

- **September 16:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done. Stones were thrown at an Israeli bus southwest of Hebron. There were no casualties but the bus was damaged.
- **September 17:** Three terrorist operatives were detained by an IDF force when they tried to penetrate an IDF post south of Bethlehem. A 20 centimeter, or eight inch knife was found in the possession of one. A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israel bus southwest of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done. Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of Hebron.
- **September 21:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle west of Bethlehem. There were no casualties and no damage was done. Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle near the Jewish settlement in Hebron. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged.

The security forces expose a terrorist squad which carried out shooting attacks in the Ramallah region³

■ During July and August the Israel Security Agency and the IDF detained five residents of the village of Silwad (near Ramallah). All five were Fatah-Tanzin operatives responsible for shooting at a number of Israeli vehicles, and who planned to carry out other attacks.

■ Two were detained on July 9, 2009, after they shot at the car of a resident of the settlement of Nili. Later other members of the squad were detained, most of them having been detained in Israel in the past. One of them, Rami Hammed, belonged to the Palestinian Authority's General Intelligence service. The members of the squad admitted their involvement in a number of shooting attacks.

² As part of Israeli policy to ease the lives of the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria, and after meetings between IDF commanders, heads of the Palestinian Authority security services and other senior figures in the Palestinian Authority, at the end of February 2009 it was decided to ease a number of restrictions. Among them were the removal of roadblocks and checkpoints, the opening of roads, making it easier to enter Israel, etc.

³ According to a report from the Israel Security Agency.

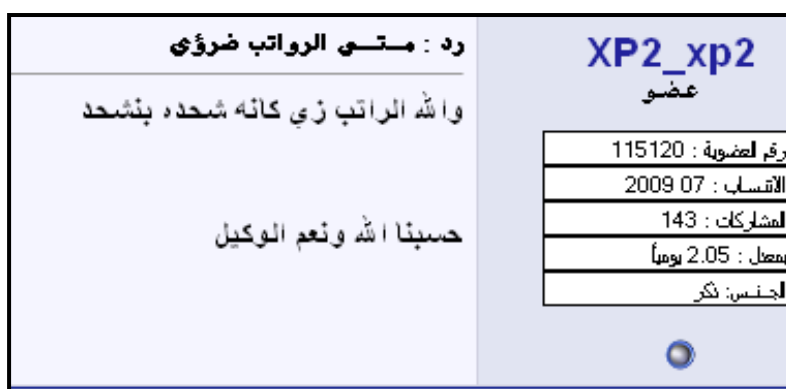
Developments in the Gaza Strip

The crossings

- The Erez, Kerem Shalom, Karni and Nahal Oz crossings were open this past week for the passage of goods and Palestinians. During the week 589 trucks made deliveries.
- The Rafah crossing was open for two days, September 15-16, and was used by 1,525 people (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, September 16, 2009).

The de-facto Hamas administration has no money to pay its bills

- In recent months there has been evidence that **the de-facto Hamas administration is in financial straits**. Administration employees have not been paid, which is unusual, especially during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, when Hamas customarily pays its employees early. In addition, the administration has found it difficult to meet its commitments to help support more than 80,000 needy Gazans. According to reports, it was able to aid only 20,000, blaming various external aid agencies for not providing the necessary funds (Safa News Agency, September 10, 2009). More evidence of the situation appeared on Hamas's PALDF forum on September 1, when a surfer asked "When [will the] salaries [arrive]? Urgent!" Another surfer answered that he felt "like a beggar asking for a handout."
- On the other hand, according to reports from the Palestinian Authority, in addition to paying all salaries before Eid al-Fitr, the PA gave bonuses of 800 shekels to every worker.



Hamas forum thread entitled "When [will the] salaries [arrive]? Urgent." One of the surfers complained he "felt like a beggar" (*Hamas's PALDF forum*, September 1, 2009).

The tunnel industry in the Gaza Strip

- "Egyptian security sources" reported the detention of **Muhammad al-Sha'er**, one of the most important Palestinian smugglers, nicknamed "The Mouse." He was detained while returning to the Gaza Strip, having used his brother's documents to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. According to the sources, he is cooperating with the investigation and has revealed the location of at least ten smuggling tunnels (*Ma'an News Agency*, September 15; *Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, September 14, 2009).

■ Rafah residents reported that during the past months the tunnel owners managed to smuggle various new-model cars into the Gaza Strip, including a 2009 BMW. A tunnel owner said that the vehicles were smuggled into the Gaza Strip through a special tunnel, particularly on “very foggy nights,” after they had been disassembled. An official in the de-facto Hamas administration’s ministry of economics said that his ministry did not intend to grant licenses or register the vehicles (*Felesteen*, September 16, 2009). In the meantime, **the tunnel industry continues claiming victims**: Mustafa al-Salhiya, 19, was killed on September 18 when a tunnel collapsed in the Al-Salam neighborhood in south Rafah (Agence France-Presse, September 18, 2009).

The Islamization of the Gaza Strip

■ The de-facto Hamas administration’s ministry of health said it was waiving tuition for the Palestine college of nursing (which the ministry operates) from male and female students who showed proficiency in Qur’an memorization. **Bassem Naim**, the minister of health, said that it would “contribute to the creation of an Islamic society and strengthen the firm stance [of the Palestinians] in the face of the plots being devised against the Palestinian people” (Ma’an News Agency, September 14, 2009).

■ The newspaper *Al-Ayyam* reported that a group of several dozen young men and women in the Gaza Strip were trying to establish a secular social movement called Al-Isha. Its objective would be to protect human rights and oppose the process of religious coercion currently being led by Hamas. A member of the group said that the idea to start the movement came after a series of recent human rights violations, including religious coercion on the beach and requiring school girls and female lawyers to wear Islamic dress (*Al-Ayyam*, September 15, 2009).

The Peace Process

Joint meeting held by American President Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas at the UN building in New York

■ After extended contacts between Israel and the Palestinians through special envoy George Mitchell, the United States announced that a tripartite meeting would be held at the UN building in New York. **All the intended participants – the United States, Israel and the Palestinians – lowered their expectations** from the meeting.

■ **White House spokesman** Robert Gibbs said that President Obama, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Abbas would meet at the UN building in New York on September 22. Before the meeting President Obama met with both leaders individually. Gibbs also said that the White House did not have great expectations from the meeting (Agence France-Presse, AP, September 20, 21, 2009).

■ **A senior source in the Israeli prime minister's office** told a *Haaretz* correspondent that the Palestinians had changed their position after having previously objected to meeting with Netanyahu. "They issued a militant announcement but in the end decided to come," he said. The prime minister's office added that the meeting was not expected to lead to a renewal of the negotiations. "It will not restart the negotiations and important issues will not be discussed," said the source. "The differences of opinion regarding the settlements and the subjects to be discussed are still great," he added (*Haaretz*, September 21, 2009).⁴

■ **Saeb Erekat, chief PLO negotiator**, said in a telephone interview with Al-Jazeera TV that Mahmoud Abbas had accepted President Obama's invitation to meet with him and later to attend the tripartite meeting. He said that American envoy Mitchell had not succeeded in brokering an agreement because the Israeli government refused to renew the negotiations about the final arrangement including Jerusalem, the refugees and the borders. He added that the meeting was not a renewal of the negotiations but rather "a tripartite meeting which will be held because President Obama called for it" (Al-Jazeera TV, September 20, 2009).

■ **Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum** accused Mahmoud Abbas of joining forces with Netanyahu, Mitchell and Obama so that "the Palestinian people and Arab people will forget the Palestinians' rights." He said that the Zionist-American plan had been exposed and that of the Palestinian Authority as well, which was intended to rob the Palestinian people of its "rights." He added that Hamas was of the opinion that the meeting was a pathetic attempt by Obama, Netanyahu and Abbas to dictate to the Palestinian people (Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, September 20, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Hamas releases 50 Jund Ansar Allah operatives for Eid al-Fitr

■ In a speech during the fast-breaking meal on September 15, Ismail Haniya spoke about Hamas' "disagreement" with its "brothers" in Rafah. He accused them of being "influenced by an incorrect understanding of Islam," "acts of heresy, bloodshed and the proclamation of an [Islamic] emirate." However, he was willing to be reconciled with them and to "draw a line" through the events in Rafah [Hamas' violent suppression of Jund Ansar Allah at the Ibn Taymiyyah mosque]. He also expressed his willingness to release several dozen detainees. He represented their release as "a gesture of the sages for Eid al-Fitr and as part of spreading the idea of appeasement" (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, September 15; Al-Aqsa TV, September 15; *Felasteen*, September 16, 2009).

■ On September 17, following the speech, **Muhammad Fawzi al-Ghoul**, justice minister in the de-facto Hamas administration, held a press conference and announced that 150 criminal prisoners and 50 security prisoners would be released for Eid al-Fitr. "A source within the Hamas

⁴ Translated from the Hebrew by the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

administration" said that the 50 security prisoners were members of the Salafist organization Jund Ansar Allah who had been detained after the events in Rafah (Reuters, Agence France-Presse, September 17; Al-Aqsa TV, September 17 and 18, 2009).



Hamas releases prisoners for Eid al-Fitr
(Hamas' Palestine-Info website, September 19, 2009).

The Palestinian Authority releases prisoners for Eid al-Fitr

■ **Adnan al-Damiri**, spokesman for the Palestinian security forces, said that Mahmoud Abbas had ordered the release of 250 Hamas-affiliated prisoners for Eid al-Fitr in several cities in the West Bank on September 26. He added that those being released no longer posed a security threat (Xinhua News Agency, September 17, 2009).

Changes in the upper echelons of the Palestinian Authority security forces

■ Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad pressed forward with reforms in the Palestinian security forces as part of implementing the Road Map and to strengthen his control of the forces and improve their functioning. To that end he appointed **Majid Faraj**, commander of the Military Intelligence, to the post of commander of General Intelligence. Faraj's place will be filled by **Nidal Abu Dukhan**, 41, who received his military training in Algeria where he was a senior operative in Fatah's Force 17. There were also reports that Mahmoud Abbas meant to replace **Ziad Habb al-Rih** with **Zakaria Muslih**, commander of Preventive Security (*Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, September 15, 2009).

■ Majid Faraj is highly regarded by Mahmoud Abbas for his success as commander of Military Intelligence. According to Palestinian sources, his appointment is the "first step" toward merging the General Intelligence and Preventive Security Services (*Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, September 16, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Dialogue

■ On September 9 Egypt sent Hamas and Fatah a draft copy of a compromise document which would lead to renewing the internal Palestinian dialogue. Both sides recently replied:

- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, announced that Hamas reacted positively to the Egyptian proposal and that it could be relied on to a great degree to

further national reconciliation. Hamas, however, had comments which would be “officially transmitted by a delegation of the Hamas leadership which will visit Cairo after the holiday to present the position of the movement and the government” (Radio al-Sawt, September 20, 2009). Senior Hamas figure **Ismail Radwan** said that the movement was in favor of the Egyptian initiative as a basis for the dialogue, but that Hamas had a number of reservations concerning the elections, reforms in the security forces, the political detentions and security coordination (*Felesteen*, September 18, 2009).

- **Izzam al-Ahmed**, chairman of the Fatah faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, told Radio Filastin that Fatah had reacted positively to the Egyptian initiative and agreed to postpone the elections for Palestinian Authority institutions to the end of June 2010, but no later, on condition that the other Palestinian organizations also agreed (Radio Filastin, September 17, 2009). On the other hand, it was reported that Mahmoud Abbas was expected to issue a presidential order before January 25, 2010, calling for preparations to be made for presidential and Palestinian Legislative Council elections. According to the sources, Mahmoud Abbas still wants to hold the elections as scheduled on January 25, 2010 (Ma'an News Agency, September 15, 2009).

Attempted assassination of the governor of the Tulkarm district

- According to a number of reports, on September 19, 2009, a group of eight masked men tried to assassinate **Talal Dweikat**, governor of the Tulkarm district. According to the reports they ambushed him in Nablus, however he and his escorts returned fire. Dweikat said the attempt was related to his activities against Fatah and Tanzin operatives in 2004-2005 when he belonged to Palestinian General Intelligence (Ma'an News Agency, September 20, 2009).