



Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center

## News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

November 3-10, 2009



The MV Francop, carrying weapons from Iran, detained by the Israeli Navy.



Cases on weapons found on board the ship (IDF Spokesman, November 5, 2009).

### Overview

- This past week one rocket was fired into the western Negev from the Gaza Strip, as Hamas maintains its policy of restraint and enforces it on the rogue organizations.
- Events this week focused on the seizure of the MV Franco, carrying a large quantity of arms (thousands of rockets, mortar shells and ammunition), apparently for Hezbollah in Lebanon. Their Iranian origin was clearly shown by the ship's manifest and the labels on the containers and sacks of polyethylene pellets found on board. Hezbollah has denied any connection to the weapons, while the Lebanese and Syrian media claim that Israel committed an act of "piracy" whose objective was to draw attention away from the Goldstone Report.
- Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, held a press conference to announce that he would not seek reelection in January 2010. His motives were apparently his mounting frustration with the stalled peace process and his deep disappointment with the American administration.

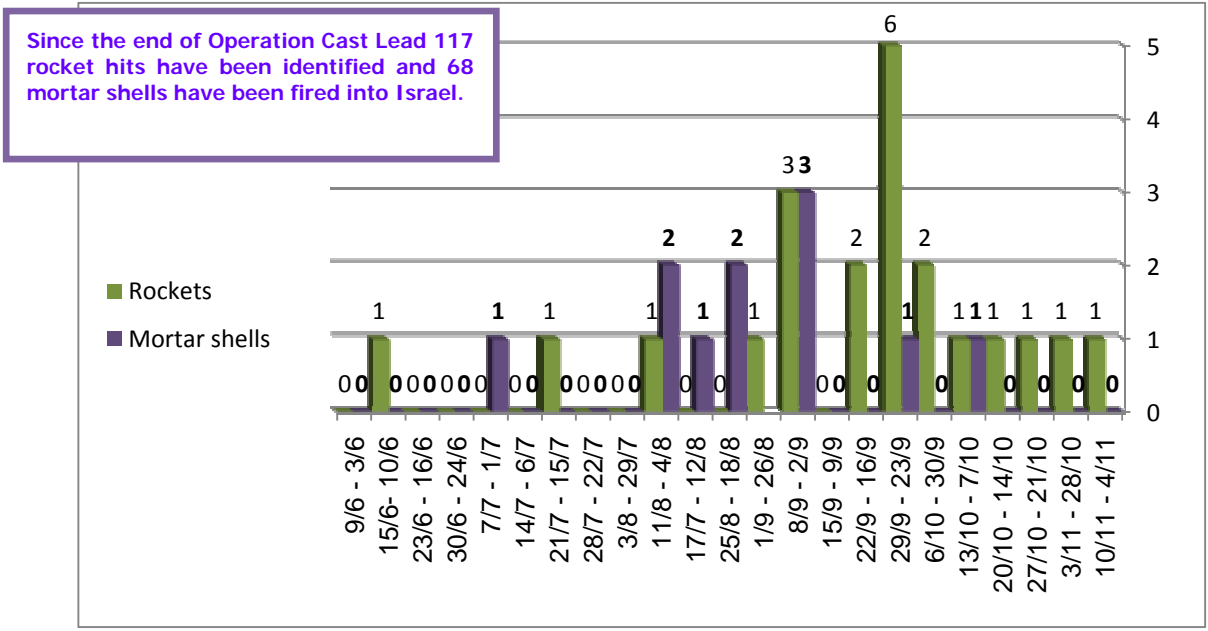
## Important Events

### Gaza Strip

#### Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ On November 9 one rocket hit was identified. The rocket landed in an open area near a city in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done. No organization claimed responsibility for the attack.

#### Rocket and mortar shell fired into Israeli territory<sup>1</sup>



### Judea and Samaria

#### Counterterrorism Activities

■ The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities this past week, detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities. There were daily incidents, chiefly the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli vehicles. At least five Israeli civilians were wounded.

■ Among the incidents were the following:

- **November 9:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle southwest of Nablus. An Israeli civilian sustained minor injuries (IDF Spokesman, November 9).
- **November 9:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of Qalqiliya. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 9).

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

- **November 8:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle in the Jewish settlement in Hebron. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 8).
- **November 6:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle south of Nablus. There were no casualties and no damage was done (IDF Spokesman, November 6).
- **November 5:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle northeast of Ramallah. An Israeli woman sustained minor injuries (IDF Spokesman, November 5).
- **November 5:** Stones were thrown at a large number of Israeli vehicles west of Bethlehem. Three Israeli civilians were wounded (IDF Spokesman, November 5).
- **November 5:** A Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli vehicle east of Qalqiliya. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 5).
- **November 4:** Stones were thrown at an Israeli vehicle southeast of Qalqiliya. There were no casualties but the vehicle was damaged (IDF Spokesman, November 4).

## The Northern Arena

### The Israeli Navy seized a boat carrying a shipment of weapons from Iran for Hezbollah in Lebanon

- On the night of November 3, 2009, the Israeli Navy stopped an arms shipment on its way from Iran to Syria, apparently destined for Hezbollah in Lebanon. The weapons were being transported by the cargo ship MV Francop, which was flying the Antigua and Barbuda flag, and was rented by UFS (United Feeding Services), a Cypriot freight delivery company. The weapons were delivered from Iran and unloaded at the Egyptian port of Damiat, where they were transferred to the MV Francop on November 2-3 and dispatched to the Syrian port of Latakia, with scheduled stops at Limassol, Cyprus, and Beirut, Lebanon. About 500 tons of weapons were seized, hidden in 36 containers. The arms included thousands of 107mm and 122mm rockets, 106mm recoilless artillery shells, hand grenades and various types of light weapon ammunition.
- The ship's manifest falsely described the containers as holding 24,224 sacks of polyethylene. In reality, the many labels on the containers, the ship's manifest and the polyethylene sacks in the containers used to camouflage the weapons clearly show that the weapons came from Iran. They indicate that the Iranians, possibly overconfident, did not bother to conceal the weapons' point of origin. The weapons themselves, however, did not bear any signs of having been manufactured in Iran.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For further information see our November 5, 2009 bulletin "The Israeli Navy seizes a ship carrying a large shipment of weapons (including rockets, mortar shells and anti-tank weapons) from Iran." at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/iran\\_e035.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/iran_e035.pdf).



Cases of weapons camouflaged with sacks of polyethylene pellets.



One of the cases labeled SEPAH (Iranian Revolutionary Guards).

- After its release the ship sailed to the port of Beirut, where it was examined by the Lebanese Navy and UNIFIL. Lebanese military intelligence agents interrogated the crew, who stated that the ship was the victim of “Israeli piracy,” and had been forced to change course for the port of Ashdod. They said the cargo was supposed to be unloaded at the Syrian port of Latakia (Lebanese News Agency, November 8, 2009).

- In Lebanon and Syria reactions to the seizure of the ship continue, more from the media than from official sources. Most of them call it “an act of piracy,” claiming that its objective was to draw attention away from the Goldstone Report. The main reactions were the following:

### Lebanon

- Sources within Hezbollah denied any connection with the weapons, denouncing Israel’s “act of piracy” (Radio Nur, November 5, 2009). Mohammad Yaghi, the Hezbollah official in charge of the Bekaa region, said that the organization had weapons which were far in advance of those on board the ship (Al-Manar TV, November 9, 2009).

- “A Lebanese security source” was quoted as saying that seizing the ship was Israel’s excuse to attack Hezbollah and that the organization was being careful (Al-Madina, November 7, 2009). Muhammad Qamati, senior Hezbollah activist, said that he did not think Israel would attack Hezbollah in the near future (Al-Manar TV, November 8, 2009).

- On November 7 the Lebanese daily Al-Nahar claimed that the ship’s cargo contained only foodstuffs sent from Iran to Syria and that according to the crew, Israel did not confiscate any arms. The paper claimed that if Israel had found weapons it would not have released the crew immediately. It also asked why the weapons had not been confiscated when the ship anchored in the Egyptian port of Damiat.

- The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese paper Al-Akhbar claimed that it was hard not to make the connection between the seizure of the ship and the Goldstone Report when it came to timing and Israel’s line of defense against the Report (Al-Akhbar, November 5, 2009).

- On November 6, the Lebanese paper Al-Safir criticized Syria and Iran, which dismissed the arms ship and did not bother to deny the Israeli claim and lodge a complaint with the UN and the Security Council, and instead placed all the responsibility on Hezbollah.

## Syria

■ The editor of the Syrian daily *Tishrin* claimed that the objective in seizing the ship was to draw the world's attention away from the Goldstone Report, but that Israel had failed to do so (*Tishrin*, November 7, 2009). Columnists for *Al-Thawra* claimed that the objective of Israel's so-called "act of piracy" was to draw the attention of the West to the danger presented by Iran and change the UN's agenda from deliberating the Goldstone Report to dealing with the weapons ship (*Al-Thawra*, November 6, 2009).

## Developments in the Gaza Strip

### The crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip

■ During the past week the crossings were open and 599 trucks entered to deliver merchandise.

### The Hamas security forces continue preventing rocket fire

■ The Internet forum of the global jihad posted a video entitled "The Border Police." According to the video, the Hamas security forces prevented a squad of operatives from one of the global jihad organizations from firing four rockets into Israel territory from the northern Gaza Strip (Global jihad forum, November 5, 2009).

■ Hamas reportedly held a series of meetings with senior operatives of the various terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip to examine the possibility of integrating them into its own security forces, subordinate to its interior ministry. It was even suggested that the military-terrorist wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad be integrated into Hamas' security forces. So far the heads of the PIJ have rejected the proposal. Army of Islam operatives, on the other hand, have agreed, since the offer included appointing Mumtaz Dughmush to a senior position in the security forces (Qudsnet, November 8, 2009).

### Palestinian Islamic Jihad military training course

■ On November 9 the military-terrorist wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad held graduation exercises for a group of its operatives. The theme of the ceremony was "I am at your service, Al-Aqsa mosque." The two-month course was held in the Al-Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City, and covered various types of training, including the use of live ammunition. The graduation was attended by senior PIJ members, one of whom, **Khaled al-Batash**, said that the courses and training would continue until "the flags of Islam and jihad are flown over the walls and minarets of Al-Aqsa mosque (Palestinian Islamic Jihad website, November 9, 2009).



**Palestinian Islamic Jihad graduation exercises (Palestinian Islamic Jihad forum, November 9, 2009).**

### Hamas test fires a rocket with a range of 60 kilometers

■ On November 3, General Amos Yadlin, head of Israeli military intelligence, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee that the previous week Hamas had test fired a rocket with a range of almost 60 kilometers, or 37.28 miles. Such a rocket could reach cities south of Tel Aviv such as Rishon Lezion, Holon and Bat Yam (Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff for Haaretz, November 4, 2009). Apparently Hamas fired a standard rocket manufactured abroad, in our assessment in Iran, which supports Hamas' efforts to rebuild and upgrade its military infrastructure.

#### ■ Hamas responses:

- **Abu Obeida**, spokesmen for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, denied the report, calling it incitement against the Palestinian "resistance" [i.e., Hamas and the other terrorist organizations] and against the Gaza Strip (*Filisteen al-An*, November 3, 2009).
- **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, also denied the report, stating that Israel was trying to influence world public opinion with an eye to the discussion of the Goldstone Report in the UN General Assembly. He said that Israel was using "media distortions" to avoid being punished by the international community (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, November 3, 2009).

### The continuing Islamization of the Gaza Strip

■ The interior ministry of the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip issued an official announcement on its website banning women from riding with men on motorcycles. The police, according to the announcement, would be on the lookout for offenders (Website of Hamas' interior ministry, November 6, 2009).

■ Hamas spokesmen would not admit that the new regulation was part of its enforced Islamization of the Gazans. **Ihab al-Ghussein**, interior ministry spokesman, claimed that the decision was made after it had been discovered that the main cause of accidents was women riding behind their husbands or other family members (Reuters, November 8, 2009). **Rafiq Abu Hani**, spokesman for the Hamas police, told Al-Aqsa TV that the reason for the decision was "to protect

public safety,” and that the fact that “giving women rides on motorcycles contradicts the nature of Palestinian society” (Al-Aqsa TV, November 10, 2009).



The announcement of the interior ministry of the de facto Hamas administration forbidding women to be given rides on motorcycles.

## The Internal Palestinian Arena

### Mahmoud Abbas announces he will not seek reelection

■ **Mahmoud Abbas**, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, held a press conference at which he officially announced **he would not seek reelection** to the post of president of the Palestinian Authority in the elections which are supposed to be held in January 2010 (Palestinian TV, Wafa News Agency, November 5, 2009). The reasons for his decision were apparently his mounting frustration with the stalled peace process and the position of the United States. It is also possible that he is trying to use his refusal to exert political pressure on Israel and the United States.

■ **The Fatah and PLO leaderships** announced that they did not accept his refusal and that as far as they were concerned, he was their candidate for the upcoming elections. Some of their reactions were the following:

- **Salam Fayyad**, Palestinian prime minister, said he hoped for a change in the external and internal circumstances which had motivated Mahmoud Abbas to make his announcement. He said that the international community should learn from the failure of the peace process and “return [the Palestinians’] faith” in it by forcing Israel to freeze building in the settlements (Wafa News Agency, November 6, 2009).
- **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, presidential spokesman, told Sawt al-Arab Radio that behind Mahmoud Abbas’ statement were the Israeli government’s refusal to relaunch serious negotiations and the refusal of the United States to force Israel to do so (Sawt al-Arab Radio, November 6, 2009).

- **Nabil Sha'ath**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, repeatedly stressed the fact that Mahmoud Abbas was Fatah's only candidate. He added that Mahmoud Abbas was very disappointed by international positions toward Israel, especially that of the United States, and by the fact that the activities of last five years and the negotiations with the previous Israeli government had not brought results (Palestinian TV, November 5, 2009).

■  **Hamas spokesmen** had the following to say:

- **Sami Abu Zuhri**, Hamas spokesman, said that Hamas viewed Mahmoud Abbas' announcement as aimed at the United States and Israel, and that it would be better if he appealed to the Palestinians and admitted the failure of the peace process (Official announcement to the press, Hamas' Palestine-Info website, November 5, 2009).

- **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, said that Mahmoud Abbas' decision not to run for reelection did not change Hamas' position regarding the elections [i.e., refusal to allow them to be held] (Hamas' Palestine-Info website, November 5, 2009).

■ The Palestinian public reacted in various ways to the announcement. In general, few people seemed surprised and most saw it as a political maneuver intended to exert pressure on Israel and the United States. There were also a few appeals to Mahmoud Abbas to recant, and his opponents gloated. After the announcement, marches were held in his support throughout Judea and Samaria, and according to reports in the Palestinian media, they were attended by several thousand people.