



The Meir Amit Intelligence
and Terrorism Information Center

News of Terrorism and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict

February 9-15, 2011



Picture from an exercise held this past week by Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives. They practiced firing rockets, detonating IEDs, sniping, etc. (Jerusalem Battalions website, February 10, 2011).

Overview

- This past week the western Negev was relatively quiet. During the first half of February there was a reduction in rocket and mortar shell fire from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory.
- The resignation of Egyptian Prime Minister Hosni Mubarak was jubilantly received in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. In Ramallah and throughout the Gaza Strip demonstrators marched in support of the Egyptian people. Ismail Haniya, head of the de facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, called the Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide in Egypt and congratulated him on the success of the Egyptian revolution. Hamas spokesmen called on Egypt to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and open the Rafah crossing to free passage, and expressed hope that the new regime would be a support for the Palestinians.
- Al-Jazeera TV's exposure of documents dealing with Israeli-Palestinian negotiations led to the resignation of Saeb Erekat, the PLO's chief negotiator. The Palestinian cabinet submitted its resignation to Mahmoud Abbas, who instructed Salam Fayyad to form an interim government. However, the PLO said the Palestinian leadership intended to hold elections for the presidency and the Palestinian Legislative Council no later than September 2011. Hamas was quick to announce it would not participate in the elections.

Important Terrorism Events

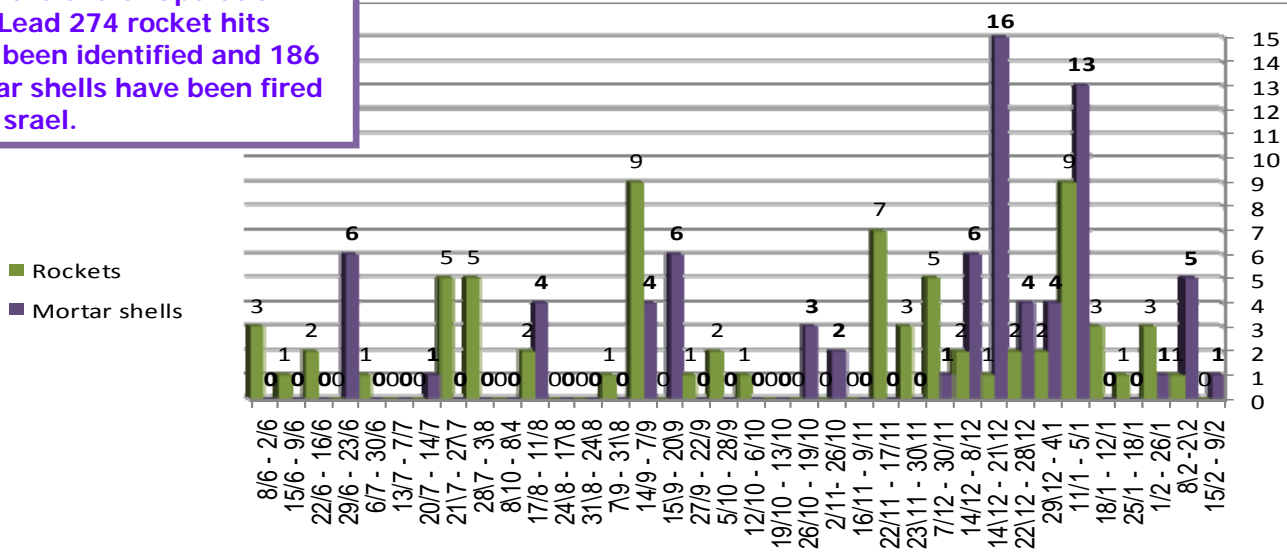
The Gaza Strip

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire

■ This past week one mortar shell hit was identified (February 14). It fell in an open area in the western Negev. There were no casualties and no damage was done.

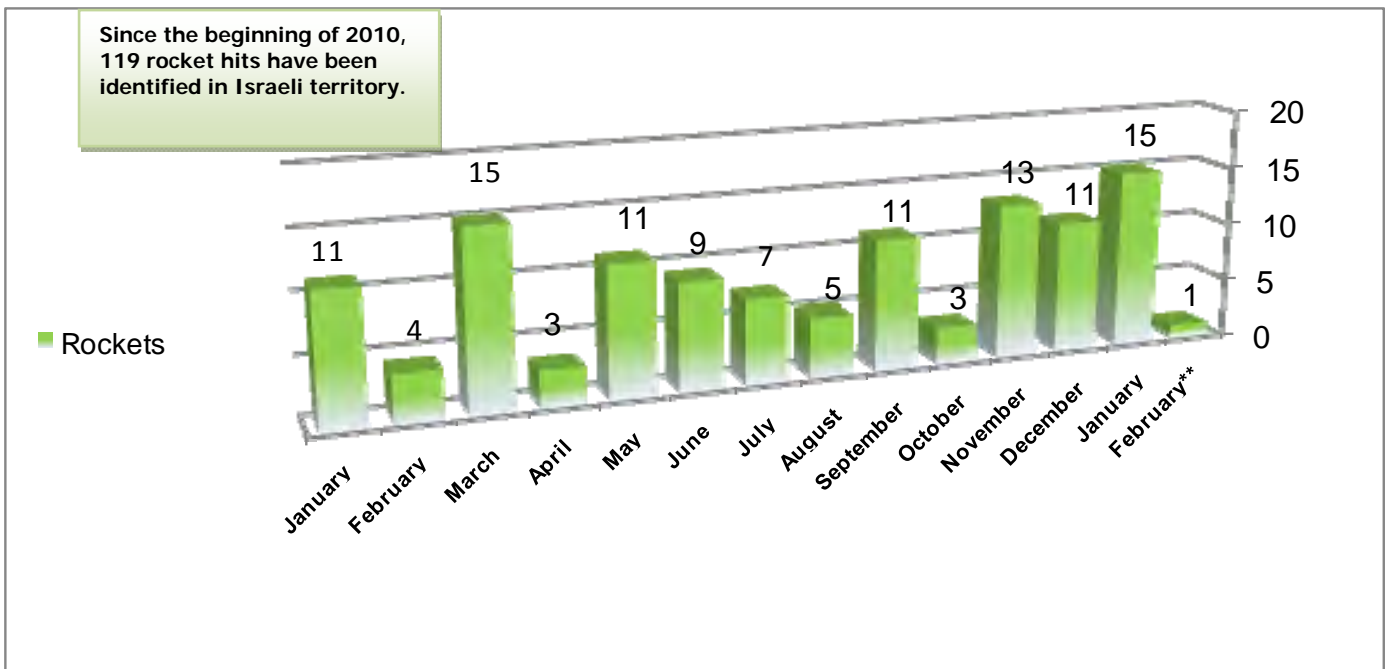
Rockets and mortar shells fired into Israeli territory¹

Since the end of Operation Cast Lead 274 rocket hits have been identified and 186 mortar shells have been fired into Israel.



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

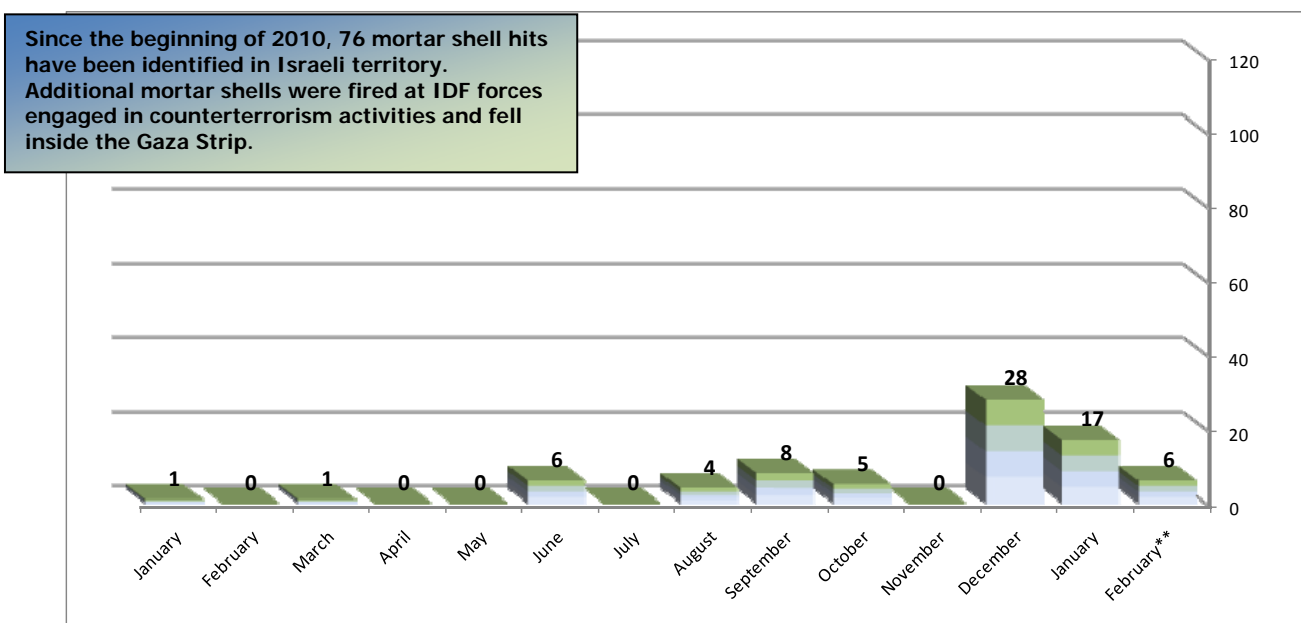
Rocket Fire -- Monthly Distribution



* Rocket hits identified in Israeli territory and not in the Gaza Strip.

** As of February 15, 2011.

Mortar Shell Fire -- Monthly Distribution



* Mortar shell hits identified in Israeli territory and not in the Gaza Strip.

** As of February 15, 2011.

Israeli Air Force Attacks

■ Following mortar shell fire on February 8 the Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked a number of terrorist targets in the central and northern Gaza Strip. Among them were a tunnel intended for use in terrorist attacks and a workshop for the production of weapons. The media reported that eight individuals sustained minor injuries from the attacks (IDF Spokesman, Ynet and Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 9, 2011).

Hamas Continues Its Policy of Rocket Fire Restraint

■ According to Arabic media reports, Hamas continues to enforce its policy of rocket fire restraint on the other Palestinian terrorist organizations. It was reported that following the mortar shell fired by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad on February 8, Hamas' internal security forces detained seven operatives belonging to the organization. Some of them were detained immediately after the mortar shell fire and the others while attempting to fire mortar shells (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 10, 2011).

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad Holds a Military Exercise

■ On February 10 the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Jerusalem Battalions held a military exercise. The operatives (including members of the sniper and "special" units) practiced firing RPGs, light arms (including sniper fire) and 107 mm rockets. They also practiced dismantling IEDs (Jerusalem Battalions website, February 10, 2011).



Left: PIJ operative practices shooting RPGs. Right: Palestinian Islamic Jihad Jerusalem Battalions sniper at practice (Pictures from the PIJ's Jerusalem Battalions website, February 11, 2011).

Judea and Samaria

The Situation on the Ground

■ This past week demonstrations and riots were held at the usual friction points, especially in the villages of Bila'in and Ni'lin. Among the demonstrators were Palestinians, Israeli civilians and foreigners. They threw stone at the internal security forces, who responded with riot control measures.

Developments in the Gaza Strip

The Crossings

■ This past week between 138 and 255 trucks carrying merchandise entered the Gaza Strip every day. In addition, 15 tons of strawberries and 500,000 flowers meant for export left the Gaza Strip though the crossings into Israel (Website of the Israeli government coordinator for the territories, February 15, 2011).

■ **Following the events in Egypt, Hamas closed the Philadelphi Route, which runs along the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, and declared it a closed military area.** The only movement allowed along the route was of trucks carrying fuel and concrete smuggled from Egypt into the Gaza Strip through the tunnels. Dealers in smuggled fuel said that supplies to the Gaza Strip were not adversely affected by the events in Egypt. They claimed that the Gaza Strip's recent fuel crisis was the result of the Gazans' fear of a possible shortage because of the situation in Egypt, and not a genuine shortage (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 12, 2011).



Trucks pumping fuel from a smuggling tunnel under the Philadelphi Route near the Egyptian border (Hamas' Safa News Agency, February 13, 2011).

Reactions to the Events in Egypt

Demonstrations in the Palestinian Authority and Gaza Strip

■ The Egyptian's president's resignation was jubilantly received in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Demonstrators marched in Ramallah holding placards expressing support for the Egyptian people and calling for the end of the so-called "Israeli occupation." Hamas organized demonstrations throughout the Gaza Strip. After the Friday prayers candy was distributed in the mosques and guns were fired in the air to show joy.

Reactions of Senior Palestinian Figures

■ **Nabil Shaath**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that the Palestinians "respect the wish of the Egyptian people for democracy." He said that a united, democratic Egypt, younger than in the past, would be able to fully support the Palestinian people and its cause (AKI, February 11, 2011).

■ Hamas issued a press release calling on Egypt to **serve once again as a support for the Palestinians** and to oppose what it called the "Zionist-America project" in the Middle East (Al-Arab Online, February 11, 2011). Senior Hamas figures publicly supported the success of what they referred to as the "revolution in Egypt:"

- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de facto Hamas administration, **contacted the Muslim Brotherhood's General Guide and congratulated him on the success of the "revolution in Egypt"** (Hamas' Palestine-info website and Al-Arab Online, February 11, 2011). A short Hamas press release noted that the victory of the Egyptian revolution would change history for Egypt and weaken the "blockade" of the Gaza Strip.
- **Sami Abu Zuhri**, a Hamas spokesman, called on the new Egyptian government to lift immediately the "blockade" of the Gaza Strip and enable free passage through the Rafah crossing (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 11, 2011).
- **Yunis al-Astal**, a Hamas member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the fall of the Mubarak regime was also the fall of the Palestinian Authority, which "participated with the former Egypt regime in the blockade of Gaza" (Hamas' Safa News Agency, February 11, 2011).
- **Ayman Nofel**, commander of the central sector of Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who escaped from an Egyptian prison during the riots in Egypt and reached the Gaza Strip, said at a ceremony held in his honor that **Mubarak's resignation and the fall of the regime in Egypt were "the fall of a regime of oppression and corruption** (Hamas' Safa News Agency, February 11, 2011).



Left: Solidarity demonstration in Ramallah (Hamas' Safa News Agency, February 11, 2011) Right: One of the solidarity demonstrations held in Khan Yunis (Gaza Strip) (Al-Rasd, February 11, 2011).

■ With the recent events in Egypt, various elements, apparently from Fatah, **tried to incite the Gazans to hold a "revolution of honor" against Hamas on February 11**. They called for the residents of the Gaza Strip to hold demonstrations and marches which would show the unity of the Palestinian people and call for the downfall of the Hamas administration. According to media reports, Hamas surrounded some of the mosques and prevented people from gathering, and only isolated marches were held. Hamas' internal security forces detained some of the participants (Al-Kawfiya Press, Hamas' Palestine-info website and Al-Ahed, February 11, 2011).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

Recent Changes in the Palestinian Authority

■ **Saeb Erekat**, chief PLO negotiator, announced his resignation. In addition, Mahmoud Abbas gave the order to dismantle the department and to reappoint it with other members, who would answer directly to himself (Reuters and Al-Quds Al-Arabi, February 14, 2011).

■ **On February 14 the Palestinian cabinet submitted its resignation to the Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian Authority chairman**. Mahmoud Abbas then instructed Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to form an interim government which would serve until elections were held, some time in 2011 (Wafa News Agency and Qudsnet, February 14, 2011).

The Palestinian Authority Announces Elections No Later than September 2011

■ **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, a member of the PLO's executive committee, announced that the Palestinian leadership intended **to hold presidential and Palestinian Legislative Council elections in the coming months no later than September 2011** (Palestinian Authority TV, February 12, 2011). In an appeal to Hamas Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas

said that they should "act intelligently" and prefer national Palestinian interests to sectoral and partisan interests. He added that the elections would preserve Palestinian unity so that a Palestinian state would not be established in only "one part of the homeland" (Wafa News Agency, February 14, 2011).

■ **Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, said in response that Hamas would not participate in the elections and that the Palestinian Authority's decision to hold them was null and void, and unacceptable, because the Palestinian Authority had "lost its legitimacy."** Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman, said that the PLO did not represent all the "political strata" and was not reliable, and called the elections illegitimate. He said that the Palestinian Authority's declaration was an attempt to divert public attention from the documents revealed by Al-Jazeera TV, and that Hamas would not participate in the elections (Hamas' Palestine-info website, February 12, 2011).