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Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

Operation Summer Rains (Update No. 6, July 6, 12 noon)



An upgraded long-range Qassam rocket in the center of Ashqelon

(Photo: Amir Cohen for Reuters, July 4)

Overview

◆ During the night of July 5, nine days after the beginning of Operation Summer Rains, **IDF infantry and armored forces entered the northern Gaza Strip to impede the launching of Qassam rockets.** The step was taken in response to the attacks on the **center of the city of Ashqelon** during the two previous days. At the same time, the Israeli Air Force has continued to attack targets in the Gaza Strip and intensive counter-terrorist activities are taking place in the West Bank.

◆ The ultimatum set by the terrorists who abducted Gilad Shalit ran out on the morning of July 4. In view of Israeli government policy not to comply with the abductors' demands, a spokesman for the Army of Islam (one of the three Palestinian terrorist organizations which abducted the soldier) announced that from now on no information would be provided about his fate. However, he hinted that the organizations did not intend to harm the soldier. The Hamas government appealed to the abductors not to kill him so that he might be used to promote "political solutions" (i.e., the release of prisoners).

The situation on the ground

Upgraded long-range Qassam rockets in Ashqelon

◆ **Two upgraded long-range Qassam rockets fell in the center of Ashqelon.** The first, on July 4, fell next to a high school in the middle of the city and the second, on July 5, fell in an open field near a residential area. The July 5 attack led to eight civilians' being treated for shock, two of them children. **It should be noted that this was the first time that Qassam rockets hit the city of Ashqelon.** Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the incident as very grave and a serious case of escalation, for which Hamas was responsible.



Al-Arabiya TV reports the Qassam rockets in Ashqelon, July 4. "A spokesman for the Israeli army announced that a rocket fired from the Gaza Strip fell, for the first time this afternoon..."

◆ An examination of the remains of the July 4 rocket showed it was an upgraded rocket having **two motors**, enabling it to travel a distance of 12.5 km (almost 8 miles). It was fired from the northern outskirts of Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, near the disengaged Israeli settlements of Elei Sinai and Dugit. A similar rocket was fired a few days previously and fell in the Ashqelon cemetery. **In our assessment, the rockets were manufactured by Hamas. The possession of such long-range rockets in Palestinian terrorist hands means that Ashqelon and dozens of other population centers in the northern and western Negev are now vulnerable to Qassam attacks.**

◆ **The Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's terrorist-operative wing, claimed responsibility for both rocket attacks:** A statement issued after the July 4 attack claimed it had been carried out as a response to the attacks on civilian facilities in the Gaza Strip (Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades Website, July 4). In the statement claiming responsibility for the attack on July 5, the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades noted that they had every intention of “continuing the path of jihad and resistance” (i.e., the path of terrorism) (Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades Website, July 6).

Broadening the scope of Operation Summer Rains in the Gaza Strip

◆ As a result of the Qassam rocket attacks on Ashqelon, the members of the Israeli Cabinet decided, among other things, to give the Israeli Prime Minister and Defense Minister the power **to broaden the scope of the IDF's actions in the Gaza Strip**. Thus on the night of July 5, infantry and armored forces took control of rocket launching sites in the northern Gaza Strip near the disengaged settlements of Elei Sinai, Dugit and Nisanit.

◆ During the past few days the Israeli Air Force has attacked terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip and access roads leading to Qassam launching sites. In addition, Hamas civilian infrastructures and a Hamas government office were attacked:

- ✓ The Hamas government's **ministry of the interior** building in the Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City. It was the second attack on the ministry (July 5).
- ✓ The **Dar al-Arqam school**, an “educational” institution belonging to Hamas in the Al-Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza (July 5).¹
- ✓ **The Islamic University** in Gaza, one of Hamas's strongholds in the Gaza Strip (July 4).²

Targets attacked in the Gaza Strip



Left: The interior ministry; center: Dar al-Arqam school; right: the Islamic University (Palestinian TV, July 4).

Israeli security force activities in Judea and Samaria

Preventing a terrorist attack in Israeli territory

- ◆ On the morning of July 5, the Israeli security forces stopped a Palestinian taxi near the Barkan junction in Samaria. One of the passengers was **Ahmad Muhammad**

¹ The Dar al-Arqam school is a Hamas “educational” institution in Gaza City which indoctrinates the younger generation of Palestinians with the “values” of violence and hatred for the Israel and the west, and raises new Hamas cadres. It is supported by “charitable societies” in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. An Information Bulletin analyzing the Hamas civilian infrastructure in the PA territories will appear soon.

² It should be recalled that many Hamas leaders began their political careers as members of the student organization at the Islamic University, among them Ismail Haniya, Palestinian prime minister; Nasser al-Sha’ir, deputy prime minister; Dr. Yussuf Ruzka, minister of information; Musheir al-Masri, secretary of the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council; and Salah Bardawil, Hamas faction spokesman, and others.

Salim Zinab, who lives near Jenin. In his possession was a plastic bag containing an explosive device.

- ◆ A preliminary interrogation revealed that he intended to carry out an attack deep within Israeli territory and that he had been dispatched by the **Fatah/Tanzim infrastructure** in the Jenin refugee camp, headed by **Zakariya Zubeidi**. That infrastructure was also responsible for an attempt to use **two car bombs** in an attack; they were detonated in Jenin by the Israeli security forces on July 4 before they could be put into operation.

Activity against Hamas's civilian infrastructure (da'wah)

- ◆ As part of its anti-Hamas activity, the IDF took action against civilian institutions belonging to Hamas (*da'wah*), **which support its terrorist-operative infrastructure**. Among their other functions, the institutions, which were declared illegal by Israel, serve as conduits for funds channeled into Hamas from abroad.

- ◆ Between July 3 and 5 the IDF acted against Hamas offices, associations linked to Hamas and Hamas-affiliated “charitable societies” in the districts of Jericho, Tubas, Samoa, Al-Thahiriya, Bethlehem and Tarkumya. They confiscated documents and other materials inciting hatred and violence. Similar activities were carried out during Operation Summer Rains in Hamas institutions in other centers in Judea and Samaria (including Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Ramallah, Hebron and the villages around Jerusalem).

Arrest of Eliahu Asheri's murderers

- ◆ On the night of July 3 Israeli security forces arrested the three Palestinians who murdered Eliahu Asheri. All three, members of Fatah/Tanzim, had barricaded

themselves in the Palestinian police station in Ramallah. They surrendered after several hours of siege. In the past, the three were involved in planning a **suicide bombing attack** which was foiled (March 2006) and in smuggling weapons from the Gaza Strip into the West Bank.



Arresting Eliahu Asheri's murderers
(Photo courtesy of the IDF spokesman)

The affair of the abducted soldier: the current situation

- ◆ The July 3 ultimatum of the three Palestinian terrorist organizations taking responsibility for the abduction of Gilad Shalit ran out on the morning on July 4. Israel did not comply with the abductors' demands to the release underage and female Palestinian prisoners in return for information.



Left: Osama al-Muzaini, senior Hamas terrorist in the Gaza Strip, announcing the severing of contact as the ultimatum ran out. Right: Abu Mujahid, Popular Resistance Committees' spokesman states conditions for the soldier's return
(Al-Jazeera TV, July 3 and 4).

- ◆ The **Israeli government** reiterated its position: it would not surrender to Hamas blackmail or negotiate the release of prisoners. The government warned the PA that it was held fully responsible for the safety of Gilad Shalit and for returning him to Israel safe and sound (Prime Minister's Office Website, July 3). In view of Israel's refusal to comply with the abductors' demands, on the morning of July 4 a spokesman for the Army of Islam (one of the three organizations which abducted the soldier) said that from now on no information about the soldier's fate would be supplied (Reuters, Gaza, July 4).

- ◆ **Appeals not to kill the abducted soldier continue: the Hamas government** repeatedly called upon the abductors to keep him alive "for the sake of the Palestinian people and the necessary political solution" (Agence France-Presse, Gaza, July 3). **Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniya** appealed to the abductors to keep him alive and treat him well (Palestinian News Agency, July 4). **Abu al-Muthanna, an Army of Islam spokesman**, said that according to the principles of Islam, "prisoners are to be respected and not harmed" (Agence France-Presse, Gaza, July 4).

Egyptian mediation difficulties

- ◆ On July 3, **Muhammad 'Ali Ibrahim**, editor in chief of the Egyptian establishment daily newspaper Al-Gumhuriya, published an editorial **extremely critical** of Hamas for having abducted the soldier and for the way in which it was dealing with the ensuing crisis. Some of the points raised by the editorial were the following:
 - ✓ **It called upon Hamas not to embrace Hezbollah's methods:** The editorial stated that Hamas had adopted the methods of Hezbollah, which has abducted Israeli soldiers in Lebanon. However, according to the editorial, there was an **essential difference** between the two because Hezbollah was a "resistance movement" [i.e., terrorist organization], whereas Hamas was "a resistance movement which became a government." Therefore, claimed Muhammad Ibrahim, "**a matter in which the international community may agree with**

elements opposing the occupation, will not be agreed upon when those elements become the government. That was Cairo's first suggestion to Hamas when it won the elections."

✓ The editorial expressed displeasure at the lack of one clear address for negotiations: **"President Mubarak...did not find one Hamas leadership which could make decisions concerning the release of the Israeli soldier.** It is neither logical nor acceptable that Cairo ask Hamas's political leadership in Damascus to make decisions in this matter, **which in turn say that the decisions are for the military wing in the Gaza Strip to make;** and when Cairo contacts the military wing in the Gaza Strip, it is told that the decision is in the hands of the Hamas [leadership] abroad... Naturally, Cairo is not willing to let Hamas send it hither and yon, **especially since this crisis has proved that Ismail Haniya is nothing more than a reflection and a cover, and that he has nothing at all to say about what is happening in this context... Egypt will absolutely not be a ping-pong ball in this matter [of the abducted soldier]...**"

✓ The international community, said the editorial, would not agree to the **central role Syria is attempting to play in the crisis:** "The most serious aspect of the present crisis is the Syrian **attempt to play a role** while exploiting the fact that [Khaled] Mashal is in Syria. **The international community will not agree to a Syrian role...** [Egypt] warns that there are elements lying in ambush for Syria which may find an opportunity to trap it because of its involvement [in the crisis]. Syria has to understand the great game Israel is playing against it based on the claim that Hamas's policies are spun in Damascus and exploiting the fact that Khaled Mashal is there. Israel also accuses Damascus of receiving immediate, ongoing updates concerning Hamas plans. And worse than that, within Hamas itself there are elements expressing the strange opinion that 'the Syrian aid to Hezbollah is what enabled it to liberate Lebanon, and therefore there is no reason to prevent the same aid from liberating Palestine...'"

The Hamas government prepares to continue conducting its business

◆ The Hamas government is trying to show the world that it is continuing its activities despite the arrest of a third of its members. According to a Hamas government report, the authority of the ministers who had been arrested in the West Bank had been transferred to their colleagues in the Gaza Strip (www.palmedia.ps, July 2). As part of that arrangement:

- ✓ **Ziyad Thatha**, Minister of Transportation, has taken on the responsibilities of the Ministry of Local Governance (arrested minister: Isa al-Ja'abari).
- ✓ **'Atef 'Odwan**, Minister of Refugee Affairs, has taken on the responsibilities of the Ministries of Jerusalem Affairs and Prisoners' Affairs (arrested ministers: Khaled 'Arafa and Wasfi Kabaha).
- ✓ **Basem Naim**, Minister of Health, has taken on the responsibilities of the Ministry Social Affairs (Welfare) (arrested minister: Fakhri al-Turkeman).
- ✓ **Yusuf Ruzka**, Minister of Information, has taken on the responsibilities of the Ministries of Finance and Religious Affairs (arrested ministers: Dr. Omar 'Abd al-Razzeq and Sheikh Naif Rajoub).
- ✓ **'Ala al-Din al-Araj**, Minister of National Economics, has taken on the responsibilities of the Ministry of Planning (arrested minister: Samir Eisha).