

MEMMO

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Hamas Abandons Pretense of Calm with Barrage of Attacks

After weeks of rocket attacks against Israeli civilians, Hamas formally announced that it will not extend the six-month Egyptian-mediated lull in fighting, which officially ended Dec. 19. During the past six weeks, Hamas and other terrorist groups have fired nearly 400 rockets and mortars into Israel, doubled their stockpile of rockets and upgraded the weapons' capabilities. Israel remains committed to reducing hostilities and facilitating humanitarian assistance to Gaza while simultaneously defending its citizens against attack. Further violence directed at Israeli civilians from Hamas-controlled Gaza may require Israel to take tougher measures in self-defense.

Hamas violated the calm long before it officially expired, and has now stepped up rocket and terror attacks.

- Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said on Dec. 18 that “there is no chance of extending the calm.”
- While rocket and mortar attacks were sporadic during the first five months of the truce, Hamas has launched close to 400 rockets and mortars since the beginning of November.
- In the two days leading up to Dec. 19—the official end to the six-month calm—Hamas fired more than 40 Qassam rockets and mortars into southern Israel, including one that exploded near a shopping center in Sderot, wounding three Israelis.
- Hamas has used the calm to double its stockpile of rockets—an estimated 8,000 to 10,000—and to increase their capabilities. Hamas has rockets that now can reach Israel’s fifth largest city Ashdod, 15.5 miles from Gaza and home to 200,000 people and Israel’s largest port, Shin Bet Director Yuval Diskin warned the Israeli Cabinet on Dec. 21.
- Even as the terrorist group has continued to fire rockets indiscriminately at Israelis, Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar condemned President-elect Barack Obama as insufficiently supportive of the Palestinians. “He is 100 percent pro-Israeli and his positions are unacceptable,” Zahar said.
- Since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, terrorists have fired more than 4,500 rockets and mortars at Israeli towns near the border with Gaza.



Hamas stepped up rocket attacks against Israelis before saying the Egyptian-mediated calm was “dead.”

Hamas continues to increase its rocket and other weapons capabilities by smuggling arms into Gaza from Egypt.

- Hamas terrorists are now using underground Qassam launch silos to make it more difficult for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to find and destroy them. The launchers, similar to those used by Hizballah, can also be operated by remote control.
- With assistance from Iran, according to Israeli security officials, Hamas has developed special rockets that can be broken down into small parts to make them easier to smuggle into Gaza. The rockets can easily be reassembled to launch attacks against Israel.
- Hamas is using advanced propellants—smuggled into Gaza during the destruction of the border wall with Egypt in January 2008—allowing rockets to be stockpiled for longer durations and terrorists to fire a larger number of rockets in a single barrage.
- In addition to increasing its rocket capabilities, Hamas has smuggled into Gaza from Egypt shoulder-fired RPG anti-tank missiles, assault rifles, high-quality explosives and anti-aircraft missiles, according to Israeli security officials.

Israel has demonstrated tremendous restraint in the face of continuing attacks, but must take action to defend its citizens.

- Israel has demonstrated extreme restraint in the face of ongoing rocket attacks. However, like every other sovereign nation, Israel has the right and duty to defend its citizens from attack.
- While Israel continues to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, it needs to take precautions in the face of the escalating violence. Israeli intelligence has indicated that Hamas is attempting to kidnap soldiers and to carry out a mass attack, forcing Israel to limit activity at the crossings on the border with Gaza.
- Despite the increased rocket and mortar attacks, Israel continues to facilitate the transfer of aid into Gaza and allow those in need of medical care to cross into Israel. Since Dec. 7, more than 400 trucks with 10,000 tons of food, tools, raw materials, medicine and medical equipment entered Gaza.
- Israel also continues to provide 70 percent of Gaza's electricity. Hamas has routinely diverted such energy for its own purposes and has sought to create blackouts to manipulate public opinion.
- When Israel has taken measures against Hamas, the IDF has specifically targeted Hamas operations centers, Palestinian rocket-launching devices, trucks carrying mass amounts of Qassam rockets, and vehicles carrying armed Palestinians.
- The State Department issued a statement on Dec. 18 condemning Hamas' rocket attacks and calling on Hamas to accept "the principles outlined by the Quartet: renunciation of violence and terror, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements between the parties, including the Roadmap."