

MEMMO

March 24, 2011

Terrorists Escalate Attacks on Israelis

The March 23 Jerusalem bombing attack marks a key escalation in efforts by Palestinian terrorists, including those backed by Hamas and Iran, to increase violence against Israelis and undermine the chance for peace talks. Since the beginning of 2011, terrorists have launched more than 130 mortars and rockets at Israeli civilian targets and murdered five members of a sleeping family in the West Bank. Last week, Israeli naval forces intercepted 50 tons of Iranian arms destined for Hamas in Gaza, highlighting the need for increased measures to prevent Iran from arming its proxies. Israel remains committed to peace talks, but may be forced to take strong measures to defend its citizens against the mounting scourge of terrorism.

Hamas and other terrorist groups have stepped up attacks against Israelis and increased their weapons smuggling.

- The March 23 bombing, which killed one and wounded more than 30, was in the heart of Jerusalem near the central bus station. The attack awakens memories of dozens of suicide bombings and other attacks in Jerusalem between 2000 and 2004.
- On March 11, a terrorist broke into a home in the Israeli settlement of Itamar and stabbed to death three children—including a three-month-old baby—and their parents as they slept.
- Hamas and other Iranian-backed terrorist groups in Gaza have increased their mortar and rocket attacks against Israeli civilians, firing more than 130 at Israeli population centers, including the major cities of Beersheva and Ashdod.
- Since Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, terrorists have fired more than 7,000 rockets and mortars into Israel.
- Hamas has also stepped up its attacks on Israeli soldiers along the border with Gaza, firing advanced anti-tank weapons at Israeli tanks.
- These sophisticated weapons are being supplied to Hamas by Iran, which has increased its efforts to smuggle weapons into Gaza amid the continuing turmoil in the region.
- Last week, Israeli naval forces in the Mediterranean stopped the *Victoria*, a cargo vessel headed for Egypt. The ship was carrying more than [50 tons of Iranian weapons](#), including [2,500 mortar shells](#) and 67,000 AK-47 rounds, which were to be smuggled into Gaza.
- The cargo also included six [Nasr-1 anti-ship missiles](#) and two radar systems. Employing the Nasr-1, a sophisticated anti-ship cruise missile, would represent a dramatic upgrade of Hamas' capabilities and would jeopardize Israeli cargo ships, pipelines, and offshore drilling rigs.



The March 23 bombing attack in Jerusalem follows an escalation of rocket attacks.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) needs to step up its activities against terrorists, end incitement and return to peace talks.

- Palestinian and Israeli measures have helped sharply reduce terrorist attacks emanating from the West Bank during the past several years. But the (PA) needs to do more.
- The PA must root out Hamas and terrorist elements associated with PA President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah Party, such as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. This group claimed responsibility for the killing of the five members of the Fogel family on March 11.
- In addition, Palestinian officials must stop the obscenity of honoring terrorists. Such activity only encourages more violence. Earlier this month, Palestinians named a West Bank town square after Dalal Mughrabi, a terrorist who killed 35 Israelis after hijacking a bus in 1978.
- Abbas must end his refusal to negotiate with Israel and meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Peace can only be realized at the negotiating table, not through the PA's campaign to gain recognition of a Palestinian state without making peace with Israel.

Despite coming under increasing attack, Israel is trying to pave the way for peace talks.

- Netanyahu has taken significant steps to pave the way for substantive talks with the Palestinians—calling for a Palestinian state, reducing barriers to movement in the West Bank and implementing an unprecedented 10-month West Bank housing construction moratorium.
- Just last month, Netanyahu and Quartet Representative Tony Blair announced a series of steps aimed at further boosting the Palestinian economy—which is growing at a 9 percent rate—including developing new infrastructure and enhancing living standards.
- Israel has vastly expanded both the range and quantity of goods allowed to enter Gaza, with a 69 percent increase in truckloads entering Gaza as compared to the previous year.
- Earlier this month the Israeli army announced that it plans to move 40,000 tons of construction materials into Gaza for U.N. schools and other humanitarian projects.

The United States must continue its support for Israel's right to self-defense and its quest for peace.

- Israel has shown extreme restraint in the face of ongoing rocket and other terrorist attacks. However, like every other sovereign nation, Israel has the right and duty to defend its citizens.
- President Obama condemned the bombing and rocket attacks, saying, "There is never any possible justification for terrorism." He also reiterated strong U.S. support for Israel's right to self-defense.
- Congress and the administration must continue to make clear that the United States will support Israel's right to defend its citizens from attacks.
- At the same time, the United States should continue pressing the PA to return to the negotiating table with Israel, end incitement and enforce security in the West Bank.
- To prevent a further escalation in violence, the United States should also press the U.N. Security Council to enforce its ban on Iranian exports of sophisticated weapons to Hamas and other terrorist groups.