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Tunnel vision

Hamas would like to draw the IDF into a grueling underground battle

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MAGAZINE



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Gazans fire 150 rockets at large swaths of Israel

IAF strikes over 300 terrorist targets • Rocket commanders from Hamas, Islamic Jihad killed • IDF warns Gazans near border: Leave the area • Two soldiers wounded in mortar attack



AN ISRAELI TANK drives toward a gathering point near the border with Gaza yesterday, as Israel prepares for a wider operation. (Hadas Parush/Flash90)

• By YAAKOV LAPPIN and Jerusalem Post staff

Hamas and Islamic Jihad fired barrages totaling more than 150 rockets at central and southern Israel on Thursday, targeting Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Beersheba, the Shfela region and locations deep in the Negev desert.

Millions of Israelis sought shelter repeatedly throughout the day, after hearing air-raid sirens. In many cases, they heard the projectiles being intercepted.

In the afternoon, four rockets were fired at the Jerusalem area. The Iron Dome system intercepted two of the projectiles, and the other rockets hit open areas.

Judea and Samaria Police said that the remains of one rocket was found in the Ma'aleh Adumim area and another in the Binyamin region.

Hamas took responsibility for the fire on the capital, saying it had used M-75 rockets.

Earlier in the day, the Iron Dome anti-rocket system intercepted at least five projectiles over the Tel Aviv metropolitan area and two others struck open areas nearby. Explosions were heard in

the Tel Aviv area, although no sirens proceeded them.

Sirens went off time and again in Ashdod, Ashkelon and smaller communities near Gaza. A house in the Sha'ar Hanegev region was struck and damaged. Hamas claimed that it fired 10 rockets of a new type for the first time ever on Thursday, calling it the Sejil-55.

Sirens sounded in the southern city of Dimona for the second straight day. Three rockets hit open areas in the Sde Boker area.

Earlier on Thursday afternoon, sirens sounded in several communities across the country as Israel's anti-rocket system intercepted a barrage of Hamas projectiles over the Shfela region.

In a possible signal of an imminent ground offensive, the IDF has told Gazans who live in a number of areas near the Israeli border to leave their homes.

The move comes after the IDF called up 40,000 reservists to replace conscripts in the West Bank, and built up its ground forces on the border.

Two soldiers were wounded by a mortar attack in the Eshkol region on Thursday – one

moderately and one lightly – and were airlifted to Soroka University Medical Center in Beersheba.

Iron Dome batteries intercepted some 30 rockets heading toward built-up areas, though a few made it by air defenses, damaging homes and vehicles. Fragments from a particularly heavy barrage of eight rockets, fired at Rehovot, was found in several locations in the city.

Since the start of Operation Protective Edge, some 400 rockets have hit Israel, and around 100 rockets heading to built-up areas were intercepted.

Protective Edge expands, Pages 2 – 6

The IDF has attacked more than 900 targets across Gaza since the start of the operation, and on Thursday, it stepped up targeted killings of terrorist commanders.

The Israel Air Force's targets have included buildings used by the Hamas leadership, the homes of senior Hamas members, tunnels, underground launchers, communications

infrastructure, military bases and weapons caches.

The IAF carried out dozens of strikes, and Israel Navy missile boats fired on coastal targets that housed weapons, as well as Hamas military posts. The IDF and the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) jointly targeted the homes of a series of Hamas leaders that were used as command and control centers by the movement's military wing, Izzadin Kassam. One of the homes belonged to Uval Janadiya, a deputy commander of Hamas forces in Gaza City's Saja'yia neighborhood who oversaw attacks on soldiers, and took part in the fighting against the IDF's Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012, the army said.

The home of Arafat Abu Abdullah, an Islamic Jihad commander, was also hit. Abu Abdullah commanded Islamic Jihad terrorist activity from the central Gaza Strip, including rocket fire on Israel in recent days. Mahdi Kuara, a Hamas operative from Khan Yunis in southern Gaza, and Nisim Abu Ajaina, a Hamas commander from Beit Lahyaia

See GAZANS, Page 10

Bombing plot foiled at checkpoint

• By BEN HARTMAN

Defense Ministry security guards stopped a Palestinian car with two passengers carrying a bomb they believed was meant for a terrorist attack

inside Israel, Judea and Samaria Police said Thursday afternoon.

The white four-door hatchback with PA plates was stopped at the checkpoint at the Sha'ar Shomron intersection

on Highway 5 in the West Bank northeast of Tel Aviv after it "drew the suspicion of security guards," according to police.

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Looking for middle ground

ANALYSIS

• By HERB KEINON

As Operation Protective Edge enters its fourth day, the eight-person security cabinet – which met in a marathon session on Thursday – is faced with a stark strategic choice.

Should Israel retake Gaza, destroy its terrorist infrastructure and then control the Strip for the foreseeable future – paying a price in Israeli casualties that will likely result from both the initial occupation and the cleaning out of the area, and then having to administer

Gaza for who knows how long?

Or is it better to suffice with delivering Hamas a punishing blow, stopping short of retaking the Strip, but knowing full well that if that is the course of action pursued, than in another few years what is happening now will simply repeat itself?

Israel launched Operation Cast Lead in December 2008, an operation that led to the death of 13 Israeli soldiers, and some 1,166 Palestinians, nearly 800 of them defined as combatants. The deterrence achieved in that operation lasted almost five years, until November

2012, when Operation Pillar of Defense was launched, an operation that led to six Israeli fatalities, and 133 Palestinians, of which 80 were combatants.

That deterrence only lasted a year and a half – until now.

Neither Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu nor Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon have given any indication that they are interested in once again taking over Gaza, but if the pounding the IDF has delivered from the air does not – within a few days – bring about the

See LOOKING, Page 10

Barkat: Hamas rockets don't discriminate between Christians, Muslims and Jews

EXCLUSIVE

• By DANIEL K. EISENBUD

A few hours before four Hamas-launched rockets reached the capital Thursday

SHABBAT	BEGINS	ENDS
Jerusalem	7:07 p.m.	8:29 p.m.
Tel Aviv	7:28 p.m.	8:31 p.m.
Haifa	7:21 p.m.	8:33 p.m.
Beersheba	7:26 p.m.	8:29 p.m.
Eilat	7:21 p.m.	8:23 p.m.

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evening, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat assured city residents that if they follow protocol when warning sirens go off, they should remain safe.

In an exclusive interview with *The Jerusalem Post* outside his office in Safra Square, Barkat discussed heightened tensions between Arabs and Jews in the city, while reassuring residents that Jerusalem remains one of the "safest cities in the world."

"If you look at the statistics, no one in Israel has been hurt, so Israel knows how to defend itself very well," he said. "The reality is that, generally, it is one of the safest places in the world. Naturally it doesn't look like that on television, but the reality is that our crime rate is one-tenth [per capita] compared to New York, Los Angeles and Chicago."

Asked what the municipality is doing to keep residents safe, Barkat cited the Iron Dome missile defense system, as well as the city's many bomb shelters.



NIR BARKAT (Daniel K. Eisenbud)

"We have a shield that protects us from indiscriminate rockets, and Iron Dome knows how to differentiate between rockets that land in open fields and those that can do damage, and targets the ones that can," he said. "God forbid if a rocket does fall in the city, people know how to take cover. So the system as a whole gives us a very high level of confidence in times of trouble."

As tensions in the city have peaked between Arabs and Jews since the murders of the three yeshiva students and

subsequent revenge killing of an Arab teen, Barkat said it is imperative for both groups to work together to eradicate radicals who engender such hatred.

"The murders caused a great deal of tension and grief both

See BARKAT, Page 10

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Netanyahu says more 'stages' to come in Gaza operation

Abbas: Israel has already decided to launch ground offensive

• By HERB KEINON and KHALED ABU TOAMEH

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu emerged from a marathon security cabinet meeting on Thursday at the end of Operation Protective Edge's third day, saying the campaign would continue and expand.

Netanyahu issued a statement saying the operation was progressing as planned, and that "more stages were expected." Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating from the Gaza Strip had been hit hard by the IDF attacks, and would be hit even harder as the operation continued, he said.

The prime minister gave no indication of

when or whether ground troops would be committed to the campaign, nor what steps needed to be taken by the other side for Israel to halt the operation.

One official said it was clear that what Israel might have accepted two weeks ago in terms of "quiet for quiet," it would not accept now. Netanyahu, the official said, would not agree to a situation whereby yet another cease-fire would be declared, which Hamas would then take advantage of to "tend to its wounds" and restock missiles for the next round.

The official refused to say what exactly Israel

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