**The Hamas Intelligence War against Israel**

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**Prologue**

As I write these lines, Israel is in the midst of a war with Hamas in Gaza, which began following Hamas’ attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

Hamas launched its attack during the early hours of a Saturday morning, which was also the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, the last of the Jewish High Holidays during the first month of the Jewish calendar. Over a thousand Hamas operatives entered Israel at the same time—through breaches they had made in the border fence, or on routes that bypass it from the air and sea. They attacked Israeli settlements and bases, as well as dozens of civilians who had been enjoying an all-night nature party, exercising, or traveling along the road. During the attack, around 1,200 Israelis were murdered, some extremely brutally, including babies and children. From that day, until the time of writing these lines in December 2023, a war has been waging in Gaza, in which Israel is seeking to destroy Hamas’ governmental and military capabilities.

We can analyze the October 7 attack and the war that broke out in its wake from several different and varied perspectives. This was an extraordinary event—and in some respects, it is difficult to find any parallels with it in terms of both its characteristics and its intensity, either in the history of conflicts in general, and certainly not in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One area that has been the focus of considerable discussion since the October 7 attack involves the field of intelligence. On the one hand, there has been widespread concern over Israel’s failure to offer any prior warning about Hamas’ attack plans, both in a conceptual sense—the Israelis being bound to the conception that Hamas had been deterred and did not seek to escalate its actions at the time—and in a military-strategic sense—of identifying the preliminary signs of an attack, issuing an alert, or and preparing the army to thwart it before it occurred, or, at the very least, as soon as it began.

Alongside this very public discussion, and in the more focused context of the book that you, the reader, have before you, many are seeking to understand how Hamas was even able to accomplish such a successful and effective attack. Here, the intelligence component is of dramatic significance—there is considerable evidence to indicate that Hamas had extensive and accurate preliminary intelligence regarding Israel’s military capabilities around Gaza. It had excellent knowledge of the operational routines and the Vulnerabilities of the very defensive capabilities that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) had been building up for years—and into which Israel had invested billions of dollars and incorporated the latest advanced technologies. On the day of the attack, Hamas was able to break through this defense system both quickly and extensively.

Furthermore, Hamas had accurate information about what was happening inside Israeli territory. The manner in which Hamas attacked IDF bases in the area surrounding Gaza pointed to its prior knowledge regarding their role and structure. Hamas also had detailed intelligence on physical plans, operations, and residents of the Israeli settlements. Maps and information discovered on the bodies of the terrorists who carried out the attack indicated that they had known very well exactly where to go and where to strike.

The timing of the attack also suggest that Hamas has a significant level of intelligence-gathering, analysis and study of the Israeli side. On the general level, Hamas was closely following the growing divide in Israeli society revolving around the legal reforms promoted by the government that was elected in November 2022 and the widespread protests the reforms generated. These included public demonstrations and even talk of refusing to serve in the army should the reforms become enacted into law. We can assume, with a high degree of confidence, that the timing of the attack—which had been years in the planning—was linked to Hamas’ assessment that Israel was at one of the lowest points in its history in terms of social cohesion. On the very particular level, Hamas chose to carry out its attack on a Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath, when there is always a certain thinning of Israel’s military apparatus) that also coincided with a Jewish holiday—Simchat Torah—to take advantage of the IDF’s reduced ability to respond.

In addition to Hamas’ ability to gather and analyze intelligence and study Israel, the October 7 attack demonstrated the group’s counterintelligence capabilities. Hamas managed to conceal both its preparations for the attack and its decision to carry it out so successfully that although Israel did have information that *something* was about to take place, the information it had did not pass the threshold that would cause an alert. One of the ways in which Hamas was able to achieve this level of secrecy was through high levels of compartmentalization within Hamas itself, whereby only a few individuals were privy to the knowledge regarding the decision to carry out the attack and the exact date on which it would occur. The terrorists recruited to carry it out were given knowledge about it only immediately prior to its execution. Hamas’ ability to conceal its plans from Israel indicates that the organization is continuously studying Israel’s intelligence capabilities and developing methods to plan and carry out operations without being discovered by Israel.

Moreover, according to information that is gradually being revealed about the October 7 attack—or Operation Al-Aqsa Flood as Hamas refers to it—the operation was preceded by a scheme of deception that was carried out both at the strategic and the tactical levels. At the strategic level, Hamas deliberately messaging deliberately indicated that its main focus was economic issues. A recent piece of journalism has claimed that Hamas even signaled its interest in a prisoner swap in return for Israeli captives in its hands (before October 7). All of this fit very well into the line of reasoning among Israel’s political and security echelons, as reflected in the words of Israel’s military intelligence (AMAN) chief in September 2022: “In Gaza, I see that alongside the use of force and significant deterrence against Hamas, the processes that Israel has led […] for economic stabilization, the entry of workers [from Gaza into Israel], improving [quality of] life […] offer the potential for many years of peace.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

At the tactical level, in the period preceding the attack, Hamas instigated protests near the border, under cover of which its operatives were able to approach the border fence and place devices and structures alongside it, ostensibly as part of the demonstrations. In this way, Hamas was able to advance its preparations for the attack and complete its gathering of vital intelligence regarding the IDF’s capabilities along the border fence. Its understandings with Israel not only resulted in financial gains for Hamas (mainly Israel allowing the entry of workers from Gaza into Israel) in exchange for the cessation of the demonstrations. They were also part of the group’s wider plan to lull Israel into a false sense of security and reinforce Israel’s assessment that Hamas was not seeking escalation, and most certainly not an attack of this magnitude. Thus, despite there being quite a few signs on the ground, including public training by Hamas to take over Israeli settlements and bases—no alarm bells were sounded within Israel’s security echelons.

Given all this, Hamas’ attack on October 7 had a crucial intelligence component, and it is essential to grasp this aspect in order to analyze how the attack was carried out. To fully understand how Hamas was able to reach this point, we need to study the longstanding intelligence war that Hamas has waged against Israel. In this book, the reader will find an in-depth examination of the development of Hamas’ various methods of intelligence-gathering, details of how the organization has studied and analyzed Israel over the years, and of how it has worked to thwart Israeli intelligence’s ability to penetrate its ranks. Hamas’ use of deception is also not new, and has evolved over the years, as have its activities around using double agents against Israel.

Thus, beyond its historical contribution, this book also provides an answer to a fundamental question: How can an actor that is the non-state weaker actor from a military, technological, and resource point of view to achieve significant gains in an intelligence war against a strong state opponent who is dozens of times more capable than it—as Hamas was able to do in its October 7 attack? The short answer is that Hamas has been able to develop an intelligence system that is ideal **for its needs**—which are fundamentally different from the needs of a state. The reader will find a longer and far more detailed answer in the analysis presented in this book. It is possible that greater knowledge of this important aspect of the intelligence capabilities of violent non-state actors such as Hamas—an area that, to date, has not been extensively researched—could prevent, or at the very least reduce, intelligence “surprises” of this sort, and could even help open an in-depth discussion on how states can deal with threats of this nature.

**Introduction**

Throughout history, intelligence has played a crucial and fascinating role in conflicts, wherein the contending parties use secrets and stratagems to engage in a battle of wits.[[2]](#footnote-2) Intelligence is an essential tool for any actor that uses military force to meet its needs, and comprises part of the infrastructure necessary for the success of the actor’s operations.

*The Hamas Intelligence War against Israel* tells the story of the intelligence dimension of Hamas’s struggle against Israel from Hamas’s inception to the present day. Since its founding in 1987, Hamas has been at war with Israel; it has continuously collected information on its adversary in order to conduct successful operations and manage its activity wisely. As Hamas has developed and its institutions have become more established, and as changes have taken place in the nature of the conflict, this activity has gradually become more organized and sophisticated.

The aim of this book is to describe and analyze the evolution of Hamas’s intelligence warfare against Israel. This includes Hamas’s various methods for gathering information, its use of this information for operational needs and strategic analysis, and its counterintelligence activity against the Israeli intelligence apparatus. The framework of the manuscript is historical, addressing the different disciplines of intelligence in turn. It discusses how intelligence and counterintelligence warfare has been an integral element of Hamas’s development, spanning the entire struggle between Hamas and Israel. This book, then, is the first full-length work to analyze the intelligence efforts of a violent non-state actor (VNSA) throughout all the years of its activity from a multidisciplinary perspective, based in part on numerous primary sources.

Hamas was founded in 1987, the same year that the First Intifada began in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The uprising, which involved fierce clashes between large groups of Palestinians and Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops, occurred in tandem with the decision of Shaikh Ahmad Yassin – until then known as a religious and social leader at the head of an extensive *dawa*[[3]](#footnote-3) network – to gather a number of close associates and declare the establishment of the new resistance movement Hamas. Hamas’s ideological roots are planted deep in the soil of the Muslim Brotherhood, as expressed in the organization’s 1988 covenant. During the Intifada, Hamas began to challenge Fatah’s control of Palestinian society and gradually gained the support of the populations of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Similarly, during and after the talks that led to the signing of the Oslo Accords (1993), Hamas operatives continued to reject contact with Israeli leaders, whom they referred to as “occupiers,” and cleave to the path of *jihad*. In the 1990s, Hamas and Israel engaged in a drawn-out struggle; Hamas operatives carried out numerous and severe terror attacks within Israeli territory, while the IDF and Shin Bet attempted to arrest Hamas operatives or single them out for targeted killing operations. In 2000, when the Second Intifada broke out, Hamas spearheaded the attacks against the Jewish state. In response, in 2002, the IDF began to take a hard line against Hamas’s terror operatives, beginning with Operation Defensive Shield. At the same time, it eliminated most of Hamas’s leadership, including Shaikh Yassin himself in 2004, which significantly handicapped the organization’s ability to function.[[5]](#footnote-5)

However, this was the “calm before the storm,” which preceded Hamas’s transformation into a stronger and more significant force. In the wake of the damage done to the chain of command, and in tandem with Israel’s announcement of its disengagement plan (Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005), Hamas began to expand its political power and acquired considerable authority within Palestinian society. When Hamas seized control of much of the area evacuated by the IDF, its military wing underwent a process of institutionalization. This included the entire field of intelligence, which eventually became an integral part of Hamas’s military effort. In January 2006, Hamas won the parliamentary election in the Palestinian Authority, and thus for the first time became a ruling entity within the PA’s territory. However, internal disputes between Hamas and Fatah turned into an all-out struggle for the throne, until finally, in June 2007, Hamas violently seized power over the Gaza Strip. Since then, Hamas has been the sole de facto ruler of the entire Gaza Strip, deploying troops from its increasingly official and organized military wing all along the Gaza-Israel border.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Since Hamas assumed its current role as the governing entity of the Gaza Strip, the conflict between Hamas and Israel has known periods of more and less calm. Once every few years, a widespread paroxysm of violence erupts between the sides; the four most significant occasions have been Operation Cast Lead in 2008, Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012, Operation Protective Edge in 2014, and Operation Guardian of the Walls in 2021. These episodes of fighting have highlighted the two sides’ fundamental asymmetry, as each warring side has tried to capitalize on its advantages while attacking its enemy’s Achilles’ heels – both on the battlefield and via “soft” efforts in psychological warfare and public diplomacy.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Generally, it may be said that from its founding in 1987 until the mid-2000s, Hamas’s operational efforts were tactical in nature, based on local cells and infrastructure, and focused on terror attacks on Israeli civilians and security forces. After Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip, when Israel ceased to have both a military and a civilian presence in this territory, Hamas grew and became institutionalized. The military wing, the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, developed a hierarchical structure and increased in professionalism. After Hamas came to power de facto in June 2007 (after winning the January 2006 elections de jure), this process became more significant, with Hamas’s governmental apparatus taking part in the resistance against Israel. As will be demonstrated in the book, the intelligence development of Hamas has gone hand in hand with the organization’s evolution.

Most of the research literature on Hamas focuses on the ideological and political aspects of its activity. Nevertheless, some scholars have studied Hamas as a military organization and a fighting force. Some examples include Khaled Hroub’s *Hamas: A Beginner’s Guide*, which discusses Hamas’s resistance and military strategy until the mid-2000s, with a particular focus on suicide attacks.[[8]](#footnote-8) The third chapter of Zaki Chehab’s *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies* describes the development of Hamas’s military wing.[[9]](#footnote-9) The seventh chapter of Jennifer Jefferis’s *Hamas: Terrorism, Governance, and Its Future in Middle East Politics* deals with Hamas as a military organization, including its origins, its structure, and its activities during periods of combat in Gaza.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Other books address the military side of Hamas within a general narrative of its evolution. These include Tareq Baconi’s *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance*, Azzam Tamimi’s *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, and Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela’s *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*.[[11]](#footnote-11) These works analyze Hamas’s military operations, capabilities, and strategy as part of a holistic analysis of the organization’s story.

Several articles published in academic journals or by research centers also address Hamas as a military force. For example, Yoram Cohen and Jeffrey White’s research gives a broad picture of Hamas’s military capabilities and activity.[[12]](#footnote-12) Articles by Omer Dostri and Kobi Michael, and by Guy Aviad describe Hamas’s military development in general.[[13]](#footnote-13) A number of other articles relate to specific military aspects of Hamas. Nicole J. Watkins and Alena M. James explore Hamas’s tunnel-digging efforts; Aviad Mendelboim and Liran Antebi examine Hamas’s use of technology; Lian Zucker and Edward H. Kaplan address Hamas’s rocket capabilities and their potential and actual damage.[[14]](#footnote-14), [[15]](#footnote-15), [[16]](#footnote-16) Other articles grapple with the broader effects of Hamas’s military activities: Minna Saarnivaara studies the repercussions of Hamas’s suicide campaigns, and Somdeep Sen investigates perceptions of Hamas’s military activity among Palestinians. [[17]](#footnote-17), [[18]](#footnote-18) However, as we can see, the conflict between Hamas and Israel has never been studied from an intelligence perspective.

In addition, the present research breaks new ground in the field of intelligence studies, as well as in the study of political violence and terrorism. The study of the intelligence efforts of VNSAs is a palpable lacuna in these areas of academic discourse. Most political and historical research tends to focus on intelligence operations by states rather than by non-state actors.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the intelligence of VNSAs. Thus, a number of articles on the subject have been published in the last decade; however, only two of these articles addresses Hamas.[[19]](#footnote-19) The other articles examine the topic from specific perspectives, concentrating on a certain actor and/or discipline, or attempt to provide a theoretical understanding for the phenomenon.[[20]](#footnote-20)

With regard to books or other full-length works, almost none are devoted to the study of VNSAs’ intelligence. The only existing full-length text remotely related to the topic of VNSAs’ intelligence or counterintelligence is Blake W. Mobley’s *Terrorism and Counterintelligence: How Terrorist Groups Elude Detection*, which aims to create a theoretical framework for the counterintelligence methods used by terrorist groups, and does not mention Hamas at all.[[21]](#footnote-21) The present book, therefore, is the first full-length monograph to address the intelligence and counterintelligence of a VNSA; it will contribute not only to the historical scholarship but also to the development of a theoretical framework for this important topic.

As the book reveals, intelligence pervades the full range of Hamas’s activity: decision-making, perceptions and assessment of the conflict, military operations, organizational structure, technological development, and so forth. For this reason, an analysis of the history of the conflict from an intelligence perspective leads to new and compelling insights. The book addresses the entire scope of the organization’s intelligence activity, from low-tech observation outposts and the gathering of open-source information from Israeli media to sophisticated cyberwarfare and the use of double agents, and notes the advances made by Hamas over the years.

The book is based on research using Arabic, Hebrew, and English sources. These include many primary sources from within Hamas, some of which have never before been published, as well as primary sources from the Israeli side, including not only official documents but evidence and confessions from legal proceedings conducted in Israel, which contain important information about intelligence activity. This wide range of sources facilitates a broad and original portrait of the intelligence and counterintelligence activities of Hamas.

The book includes seven chapters; each chapter is dedicated to one discipline of intelligence, providing a chronological overview of Hamas’s activity within that discipline. The first four chapters explore Hamas’s foremost methods of intelligence collection. The first chapter deals with Hamas’s geospatial (GEOINT) and imagery intelligence. This chapter describes how Hamas operatives set up tactical observation posts during the First Intifada, the years after the Oslo Accord, and the Second Intifada, and explores the systematization of this activity after Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Eventually, Hamas established the *murabitun*, a border patrol force that staffs observation posts and serves as the first responder to any Israeli incursion, and instituted an observation section of the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. The members of the latter section used more advanced equipment than had previously been deployed and documented their findings for in-depth analysis. This chapter also describes Hamas’s efforts to develop and operate unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for observation missions.

The second chapter deals with Hamas’s human intelligence (HUMINT) activity. Hamas, of course, makes use of the most traditional method of intelligence gathering – information from human sources. This chapter details how Hamas first recruited local sources for short periods and specific missions. Gradually, sources were recruited who could operate outside of Israel; these sources were sent on longer-term and more advanced missions. Hamas also used the internet, i.e., social media and email, to contact and handle potential sources. This chapter will also describe how Hamas turned collaborators with Israel into double agents and ran operations using these agents.

The third chapter explores Hamas’s open-source intelligence (OSINT), which is readily available and inexpensive. Hamas has collected substantial information from open sources, mainly the Israeli press. In this case, Hamas exploits the fact that Israel is a democratic state with a relatively free press in order to obtain valuable information for its operations. This sort of collection grew more systematic after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, becoming Hamas’s main source for strategic analysis. This chapter describes the intelligence content gathered by Hamas and its contribution to Hamas’s general operations.

The fourth chapter sheds light on Hamas’s signal intelligence (SIGINT) and cyberwarfare. It describes how, in the first decade of the 2000s, Hamas gained SIGINT capabilities that made it possible for Hamas to intercept the camera broadcasts of IDF UAVs, as well as the IDF’s visible tactical communication traffic. In the 2010s, Hamas began to invest in cyberwarfare. This chapter also surveys Hamas’s successful use of various hacking methods to penetrate the smartphones of IDF soldiers and officers, extracting information and installing spyware; descriptions of several real-life cases are included for illustration.

While the previous chapters addressed Hamas’s intelligence collection, the fifth chapter will focus on the organization’s counterintelligence efforts against Israel. In order to overcome Israel’s attempts to infiltrate its ranks, Hamas went to great lengths to screen potential recruits and instituted a rigorous system of internal compartmentalization. In addition, Hamas worked diligently to expose collaborators with Israel, both within its ranks and in the broader society in which the organization operates. To thwart Israel’s SIGINT activity, Hamas tried to avoid the use of wireless communications and made use of encryption, both in telephone communications and correspondence.

To defeat Israel’s GEOINT efforts, Hamas tried to conceal its activities to the greatest extent possible. This included a range of strategies, including camouflage, the assimilation of military installations in civilian surroundings, and the use of subterranean spaces. With regard to open-source media publications, Hamas became aware of the need to impose censorship to hide certain characteristic signs of their activity. This is evident from a comparison of foreign media coverage with Hamas’s own media releases.

The sixth chapter will analyze Hamas’s use of intelligence to conduct successful operations against Israel. The combination of intelligence gathering and clandestine activities, as described in the previous chapters, led to several high-quality operations against Israel. For example, in an attack in 2006, Hamas successfully abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit and was able to keep him hidden for years, despite Israel’s efforts to find and rescue him in the tiny Gaza Strip. In addition, Hamas created a “bank” of targets through its intelligence-gathering efforts. This structured list of vulnerable quality targets was used to focus rocket attacks against Israel and find locations for suicide attacks.

The seventh chapter explores Hamas’s strategic analysis and study of Israel and the IDF. As part of its intelligence warfare, Hamas strove to increase its knowledge of the enemy. This chapter will describe Hamas’s accumulation of intelligence about Israeli weaponry, IDF units, Israeli battlefield tactics, operational training, and so on. The organization particularly sought information about the capabilities of Israeli armored vehicles in order to inform its use of anti-tank weaponry. The chapter will also illustrate how Hamas disseminated this knowledge in its ranks.

This chapter goes on to analyze Hamas’s operational preparations for war after Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Further, it will examine Hamas’s ongoing assessment of the possibility and characteristics of a large-scale Israeli attack, and in particular the analysis of the Israeli political and social situation used by Hamas in order to form such an assessment. In this manner, the chapter discusses the influence of Hamas’s “enemy image” of Israel – an image based on the organization’s Palestinian Islamic ideology as well as its interpretation of events and social processes in Israel – on the organization’s assessment of its enemy.

The chapter also sheds light on the organization’s difficulties in obtaining inside information on Israeli decision-making processes. For this reason, its ability to predict Israel’s future moves have primarily been based on OSINT, analysis of past cases, and situation assessments. This has led to several blunders, such as the failure to anticipate that Israel would respond as forcefully as it did in Operation Cast Lead (December 2008–January 2009) or to foresee its assassination of Ahmad al-Ja'bari at the beginning of Operation Pillar of Defense (November 2012).

The conclusions section sums up the contribution of Hamas’s intelligence to the organization’s activities associated with its struggle against Israel. It details the strengths and weaknesses of the organization’s efforts to gather intelligence on Israel, counter Israeli intelligence activity, and assess Israel’s intentions and capabilities. This section also examines lessons from the case study of Hamas that may be applied to a general understanding of intelligence warfare by VNSAs.

I will conclude with a number of editorial and technical remarks. The first and most important of these is the fact that, in many cases, it was necessary to decide where in the book to place information that touches on several intelligence disciplines. This was true, for instance, with regard to Hamas’s doubling of agents, which falls at once under HUMINT and counterintelligence; similarly, Hamas’s strategic intelligence assessments are connected to analysis and research activity but based primarily on OSINT. In all such cases, I decided to place the information in the chapter that, based on my own judgment, would best tell the story according to the internal logic of the book and integrate it in the analysis of the relevant discipline.

Throughout this book, expressions and names have been transliterated using Hebrew to English and Arabic to English transliteration rules without diacritical marks, both in the body of the text and in the references in the footnotes and bibliography. Furthermore, individuals are named in full the first time they are mentioned, then referred to by their surnames; the exception is when two Hamas operatives with the same surname – generally two brothers or relatives – are described as participating in the same activity. In such cases, they will be referred to by their given names in order to distinguish between them.

**Chapter 1: Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT)**

**Forward Observation until Israel’s Disengagement from the Gaza Strip (2005)**

Until the institutionalization of Hamas’s military wing in the mid-2000s, which turned the organization into a governing entity, Hamas primarily carried out tactical actions. As such, its intelligence was largely gathered through tactical methods. At the time, Hamas’s operations in the Gaza Strip were similar to those in the West Bank, and forward observation was mainly used as a basis for actions against Israel and the IDF. Forward observation was generally carried out by the cell members that would execute the operation, without a mechanism specifically dedicated to this intelligence activity. In hindsight, Hamas operatives admit that the lack of a professional observation mechanism that would define and track targets was a significant lacuna that made it more difficult for them to carry out attacks.[[22]](#footnote-22)

At first, forward observation was used to gather intelligence prior to operations. As early as 1992, the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades carried out many attacks that the IDF characterized at the time as involving meticulous planning, considerable organizational capabilities, and “skill in gathering intelligence by means of forward observation.”[[23]](#footnote-23) At the end of 1992, Hamas members in Gaza planned an attack on the settlement of Ganei Tal; prior to the attack, they conducted forward observation and surveillance of the settlement. The operatives studied the settlement’s security measures, taking particular note of the electric perimeter fence that provided early warning to the settlement’s central security room at every touch, as well as the regular patrols of the fence surrounding the settlement. As a result, they focused their observations on the patrols for several weeks, increasing their observation activities in the week before the attack. They took particular note of the type of vehicle used to patrol the perimeter, the number of soldiers inside, the weapons carried by the soldiers, and the times at which the patrols were carried out.[[24]](#footnote-24)

This forward observation formed the basis on which the operation was planned. Its findings showed that the best day to attack Ganei Tal was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, when no extra security measures were taken. Similarly, the forward observers learned that most of the security measures, such as the patrols, were carried out in the morning; therefore, any attack on the soldiers (in order to grab the soldiers’ weapons, which Hamas needed urgently at the time) would have to take place in the morning. Also, because the attack was planned for the winter, the operatives decided that the attack would be carried out at sunrise, when it was coldest – it was likely that the soldiers would have their hands in their pockets rather than on their weapons, which would delay their response time during the attack. The forward observers also noticed that Palestinians came to Ganei Tal for commercial purposes every day of the week except Saturday, and chose that day in part to avoid the possibility that Palestinians would be hurt.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Because the Saturday morning patrols were carried out between 5 and 6 a.m., the Hamas operatives concluded that they had to be in place before 5 a.m. Also, given that the soldiers’ focus was mostly on warnings from the electric fence, they decided that the way to surprise the soldiers was to attack them from inside the settlement. On the day of the attack, January 30, 1993, the operatives arrived at 3:30 a.m., tunneled under the fence, and lay in wait for the patrol, which reached them at 5:17 a.m. They then carried out the attack, which killed two soldiers and wounded a third.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Forward observation activity continued throughout the 1990s. For example, 'Imad Abu Amuna, from the Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, joined 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 1994 at the age of 21. As a Hamas member, he engaged in forward observation and surveillance of Israeli targets for a year until his death in a suicide attack on the Karni-Netzarim road in the Gaza Strip on April 9, 1995.[[27]](#footnote-27) In addition, several months before his targeted killing by Israel in 1996, Yahiya 'Aiyyash, known as “the engineer,” and another group of operatives participated in forward observation to study the features of the security fence in the Gaza Strip region. They learned that the height of the electronic fence was about 3 meters, and that large IDF forces, including patrols, always maintained a heavy presence along the fence. Moreover, at a distance of some 100 meters from the fence along both sides, there were sensor systems that alerted the security forces when the fence was approached, as well as IDF trackers who scanned the length of the fence morning and night. In 'Aiyyash’s view, these hurdles made it extremely difficult to cross the fence. He decided to continue consistent forward observation of the patrols and IDF movements in the area, and even tried unsuccessfully to dismantle the sensor systems. According to one Hamas member, 'Aiyyash finally found a way to circumvent the fence and intended to use it to leave the Gaza Strip for the West Bank, but did not manage to do so before his assassination. However, this plan later served Hamas in carrying out revenge attacks.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Consequent to the killing of 'Aiyyash, Hassan Salamah was dispatched from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank to organize revenge attacks for 'Aiyyash’s death. He reactivated an inactive Hamas cell in East Jerusalem that counted Akram Qawasmah among its members. As the cell prepared to carry out attacks, Qawasmah led the cell on patrols designed to observe and identify potential attack sites. Using Qawasmah’s car, the men drove through Jerusalem’s city center and Ashkelon Junction, a major intersection outside the city of Ashkelon. Qawasmah reported to Salamah on Egged’s number 18 bus, describing its route through Jerusalem and the locations where the bus was most crowded. Through February and March of 1996, the cell fulfilled its objective and carried out attacks in preselected locations, including two near-simultaneous attacks on Ashkelon Junction and bus number 18 on February 25, 1996. Twenty-seven Israelis were killed and more than 100 were wounded in these attacks.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Three years later, in 1999, Ibrahim Salih, from the village of Mashhad, joined a cell of Hamas that was planning attacks on Israeli buses. Salih was asked to gather intelligence through forward observation of the Haifa Central Bus Station, the Kiryat Eliezer soccer stadium, train traffic, and Haifa’s underground funicular (the “Carmelit”). Salih executed his observations during the first half of 1999. The cell decided to carry out its attacks that summer, and Salih was told to focus his intelligence gathering on the traffic of a certain Egged bus on the Haifa-Jerusalem route. Salih took this bus several times and recorded a detailed account of the trip, information he then passed on to the head of the cell. Ultimately, in September 1999, the explosives went off by accident, apparently due to some malfunction, on the way to the attack (which was supposed to have been carried out in tandem with an attack on another bus line).[[30]](#footnote-30)

Forward observation of this kind continued into the beginning of the twenty-first century, during and after the Second Intifada. For example, the members of Muhammad 'Arman’s cell, known as the “Silwan cell,” sought a suitable target to attack. After examining the region, they decided on a nearby IDF checkpoint, Ein 'Arik. The checkpoint was chosen for two primary reasons. During their observations, the Hamas operatives noted that, in their view, the soldiers at the checkpoint treated the people passing through the checkpoint badly. In addition, the checkpoint had been established more than a year earlier, but had not yet been seriously considered as a target. 'Arman attributed a great deal of importance to preliminary forward observation. As he wrote:

Forward observation is one of the most important steps one must take to carry out a military or security action. When I say “observation,” I mean meticulous observation and in-depth reconnaissance, writing down every comment and leaving out nothing, because it will without a doubt help you carry out the action you intend to do.

As such, the cell members undertook forward observation of the checkpoint and noted that every morning, from 6:30 to 7 a.m., an unarmored Hummer arrived with six soldiers and a driver to rotate the manning of the checkpoint. This was repeated in the afternoon. After two weeks’ careful observation of the checkpoint, the operatives concluded that the checkpoint’s activities were routine and predictable. For this reason, and because it was possible to observe it from an adjacent village, they made it their final selection as a target suitable for attack.[[31]](#footnote-31)

The Hamas cell of Ibrahim Bani 'Udah, under the command of Qais 'Aduan, was active in the early 2000s in the northern West Bank. Its members included the cell leader 'Ali Sa'id, as well as Jamal al-Nassir, Khalid al-Riyan, and Majdi Balasima. In 2001, the cell was determined to carry out an attack using a booby-trapped vehicle. To that end, two cell members carried out forward observation of the Shavei Shomron settlement and the adjacent road. In doing so, they identified a bus full of soldiers coming from Jenin that routinely passed this location between 6:15 and 6:30 a.m. The bus was selected as the cell’s target. On April 29, 2001, a car bomb, driven by a suicide operative, waited in place near the road. Three additional cell members climbed up to a high point overlooking the road in order to surveil it; their task was to cue the driver to get close to the bus in order to detonate the bomb. When they saw the bus approaching, they alerted the suicide driver by cell phone, but because of some mishap, he did not leave his spot in time. Nonetheless, their preliminary observations showed that another bus carrying residents of the northern West Bank was expected to pass them at 7:15 a.m. The cell members returned to their observation post. When they saw the bus approaching, they informed the driver, who then carried out the attack on a bus of middle school students. Few of the passengers were harmed, although the bus itself sustained damage.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Similar intelligence-gathering operations also took place in the Gaza Strip. In September 2001, Muhammad al-Qun and his cousin Isma'il al-Qun planned an attack on Ami’s Café in the Rafiah Yam settlement in Gush Katif. To choose the manner of the attack, the two observed the café for two days. Based on these forward observations, they decided to place a bomb next to the entrance fence in order to kill Ami, the café’s owner. The operatives were arrested by Israeli security forces before they managed to carry out the attack.[[33]](#footnote-33) In 2002, Shaker Abu Mawr served as a forward observer for Tariq Abu al-Hasin to gather information about IDF troop movements at the Sufa crossing and Khuza'ah region using binoculars and a video camera; he documented the daily traffic and passed his findings on to Tariq. The exact use of this information by Tariq remains unknown. In an additional operation in 2006, Abu Mawr and other Hamas operatives placed explosives where they expected IDF soldiers to pass by. Abu Mawr served as a forward observer in real time to alert his comrades when IDF forces approached the explosives.[[34]](#footnote-34)

In 2001, Kalid Abu Mas'ad, a member of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, came to the home of Abu Mas'ad Hamid in Dir al-Balah to recruit him as a forward observer for the organization. Hamid was instructed to report to Abu Mas'ad on IDF troop movements in the region. Indeed, on two separate occasions, Hamid reported that IDF tanks had arrived in the vicinity of the Kisufim crossing. It is worth noting that, a few years later, Hamid’s home served as a base for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in its forward observation of IDF forces, with Hamid’s assent. The organizations (including Hamas) forced Hamid to agree to this activity by telling him that unless he cooperated with them, they would tarnish his name as someone whose loyalty was in doubt.[[35]](#footnote-35)

In April of 2002, Ra'id 'Ashur, a member of Hamas’s military wing in the Gaza Strip, was asked to identify potential locations for an attack on IDF forces and report his findings to a higher-ranking Hamas figure named Muhammad. 'Ashur asked another individual named Maher to gather information in great detail. Through Maher, 'Ashur received information about the axes along which IDF tanks usually moved, and transmitted this information to Muhammad. The information was used to detonate an explosive device aimed at Israeli soldiers.[[36]](#footnote-36) In June 2002, members of the PIJ contacted a Gaza Strip inhabitant who lived in a strategic location in Bait Hanun, near the security fence, to help them find a spot near his house to plant an IED against IDF troops and detonate it when the troops passed by. About a month later, he was contacted by another organization, the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, with a request that he carry out forward observations of IDF forces from his home. That year (2002), in tandem with the services he provided to the members of the organizations mentioned above, Hamas operatives called him several times to receive reports of the observations he had carried out from his house with regard to IDF troops’ presence near his home in the Gaza Strip, and he provided the information they requested.[[37]](#footnote-37)

In the early 2000s (probably 2002), a Hamas operative asked Tilal Fruanah, a resident of Khan Yunis, to surveil the traffic of military vehicles and civilian vehicles from Gush Katif as preliminary intelligence before an attack. Fruanah did as he was asked and carried out the observations; however, he was arrested soon after by Israeli security services, and it remains unknown whether he managed to submit his report to Hamas before the arrest.[[38]](#footnote-38) In 2002, after years of participation in Hamas activities, primarily propaganda efforts such as writing graffiti slogans, Ra'id Bardawil joined Hamas’s military apparatus in the Gaza Strip. He teamed up with a cell in which Ra'id 'Amudi was a member, and the two were asked to gather intelligence. To facilitate their activities, 'Amudi gave Bardawil binoculars, instructing him to observe the road leading from the Karni crossing to the settlement of Netzarim and keep an observation log recording the movement of civilian and military vehicles in that location. Bardawil did as asked. For at least three mornings and several evenings, he carried out observations and formulated the findings of his activities into an organized report. Later, he performed the same activity for two additional days with the help of another individual. The report was submitted to a Hamas operative named Yusuf 'Abd al-Yahab,[[39]](#footnote-39) who drew from it operational conclusions about the proper modus operandi for attacks against these vehicles. 'Amudi and Bardawil continued this activity until their arrest in 2002, and were financially compensated by Hamas for their activities.[[40]](#footnote-40)

In 2003, Muhammad Maharah joined the Popular Resistance Committees in the Gaza Strip, and undertook to attack Israeli soldiers in that capacity. In 2004, he met with two Hamas operatives – Mas'ud Maharah and Ayman Judah – in Judah’s home, where the two told him they wanted to stage an attack on an IDF outpost they called Abu Safiya (east of Jabaliya). Judah wanted Muhammad and Mas'ud to perform forward observation of the outpost and identify an access route for the attackers. He provided them with binoculars, and they set out for an orchard next to the local cemetery, about 500 meters from the target. Using the binoculars, they observed the outpost for about 30 minutes, then reported their findings to Judah, including their suggestion that the attackers approach the outpost via a nearby olive grove. About two weeks later, on September 30, 2004, the attack was carried out. One IDF solider was killed and three were wounded.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Forward observation was not only a means of collecting preliminary intelligence; it also allowed the transmission of information in real time for carrying out an operation and securing routes to and from the target. In 1999, for example, Jihad Sawiti, the head of a Hamas cell from Bayt 'Awwa, decided to go from Nablus to Hebron. However, because he was wanted by the Israeli security forces, he was afraid to be caught en route. Therefore, Nabil Musalimah and another operative were sent to drive in front of him to make sure the route was clear, gather information on IDF checkpoints, and warn Sawiti of the checkpoints’ locations.[[42]](#footnote-42) At the end of 2004, the Hamas cell of which Ahmad Halayqah was a member perpetrated an IED attack on an Israeli civilian vehicle near the P'nei Kedem settlement. In that attack, a bomb was placed in the road while the cell members climbed a nearby hill to watch for the approach of an Israeli vehicle. When one such car drove past the bomb, they set off the explosives. The car suffered serious damage, and the mother and infant inside the car were wounded. The Hamas operatives responsible for the attack successfully fled.[[43]](#footnote-43)

After serving for two years in the ranks of the PIJ, Halawah Shadi transferred to Hamas. In 2004, his cell carried out several attacks, some involving forward observation of IDF forces. When the forces reached a certain location, the cell members would detonate their bombs. This method was used once against armored battle cars in Bait Lahiya; a second time against an IDF tractor that reached a point near a restaurant where an IED had been placed; and a third time in which Shadi was the forward observer, instructing another cell member over the phone where in the Erez checkpoint to direct his fire.[[44]](#footnote-44) At a certain point between 2002 and 2004, 'Amran al'-Ghoul, a Hamas operative in Gaza, and other operatives fired mortar bombs at the Netzarim settlement from Tel 'Ail. Amran used a forward observer to call him on the phone to report where the bombs had fallen in relation to the target.[[45]](#footnote-45)

In the early 2000s, forward observation gradually assumed a more institutionalized, ongoing character, which would seem to indicate a more established pattern of intelligence gathering. 'Atwa 'Amur, for example, was recruited to Hamas in 1999 by three of the organization’s senior operatives: Muhammad Abu Shimallah, Ra'id al- 'Atar, and Ibrahim Makadmeh. From 2003 to 2006, 'Amur routinely observed IDF troop movements, especially those of planes, Jeeps, and tanks, by night at the Sufa crossing in the southern Gaza Strip. He submitted his reports to Abu Shimallah in real time via cell phone.[[46]](#footnote-46)

It is worth noting that when Hamas started operating underground, the tunnels they dug were also used to gather visual intelligence about the targets of operations before those operations were carried out.[[47]](#footnote-47) As early as December 2003, when Hamas was planning an attack using a tunnel bomb against the IDF’s Hardon outpost in the Yabneh neighborhood of Rafah, operatives used the tunnel, which was still under construction, to venture to the surface and gather information. Videotaped documentation of the incident shows how operatives photographed the outpost from up close.[[48]](#footnote-48) One may discern further intelligence aspects of Hamas’s underground activities at this time. For example, Hamas understood the standard procedure according to which, immediately after a tunnel explosion, first responders, including security forces and paramedics, would arrive at the scene. Therefore, when Hamas detonated the tunnel under the IDF outpost near Rafah in December 2004, they also placed an explosive device targeting the responders sent to the outpost in the wake of the initial incident.[[49]](#footnote-49)

**Forward Observation after Israel’s Disengagement from the Gaza Strip**

Even before Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005, and more so afterwards, Hamas worked to establish a system of forward observation and border security (*murabitun*) consisting of armed observations of IDF movements along the fence (an activity known as *ribat*). Below, several incidents will be presented to demonstrate Hamas’s forward observation activity and its development.

At the end of 2006, Isma'il Ahmad 'Anam (Abu Ahmad) and Mahmud Atiya Ibrahim (Abu Hassam) contacted Tala't Maruf to take part in *ribat* activity in the field for 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam. The *ribat* team was meant to observe IDF troop movements, including planes, drones, and tanks, during the night (from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m.). The reports were transmitted via a tactical communications device to Abu Hassam, the head of the *ribat* team; Abu Hassam then passed the information on to Abu Ahmad, who was in charge of the Bait Lahiya area. The *ribat* team was equipped with weapons. An additional *ribat* team in the area observed IDF forces and communicated with Maruf’s *ribat* team. Each *ribat* team had its own call sign on the tactical communications device. Concurrently, Maruf conducted observations from his home, located about one kilometer from the border with Israel, which became a guard post referred to by Hamas as “Point 10.” He transmitted his reports to Hamas operatives to assist the latter in placing explosive devices and directing fire against IDF forces entering the Gaza Strip. Thus, in August 2007, Maruf saw that IDF troops had crossed the border and were approaching his house. He reported directly to the area commander; two operatives then came to the scene, one equipped with a sniper’s rifle and the other with a video camera. They ascended to the observation post on Maruf’s roof and directed sniper fire at IDF troops. According to Maruf, he was recruited for this activity because the location of his house made it possible to observe IDF troops both from the house itself and from an adjacent field.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Around October 2007, Maruf joined another observation team. The head of the observation team, Billal 'Atiya 'Abin, was a Hamas commander. For two weeks, Ma'ruf observed IDF troop movements from a privately owned plot of land located some 400 meters from his house. It seems that these observations were for basic and routine purposes, as the operatives were not armed. The observation team members (Ma'ruf and two other Hamas members) transmitted the reports by cell phone to the man in charge of the team, Bashir Ghanam, who passed the reports on to Ahmad Ghandur (Abu Anis), then the Hamas commander of the northern Gaza Strip. At the end of 2007, it was suggested again to Ma'ruf that he set up a *ribat* point in his house; from then on, he began to conduct forward observations during the night with another three Hamas operatives, in shifts, from the roof of the house and from nearby tents. Here, too, the operatives were armed and used regular field binoculars. When they saw IDF troops enter, they would pass along their reports to 'Abin and the Hamas leadership. Based on the commanders’ instructions, they would fall back or, if there was no time to do so, fire on the Israeli troops. Ma'ruf admitted that other guard posts had similarly been erected around his house for observation purposes.[[51]](#footnote-51)

'Umar al-Qara was a Hamas operative from the southern Gaza Strip until his death in the summer of 2007. In July 2007, he recruited Abu 'Akel Basim to serve as a forward observer for Hamas. On three occasions in July and August, Basim came to the roof of al-Qara’s home, located close to the border at 'Absan al-Saghir, to observe Israeli troop movement. Basim was armed while he carried out his observation duties. Every time he saw troop movements, he informed al-Qara, who reported these in real time to 'Imad Abu 'Anzah, Hamas’s operations commander in the region, using a tactical communications device. Thus, on August 14, 2007, Hamas operatives in the region set up explosive devices near the entrance to the Gaza Strip used by Israeli military forces. 'Basim’s role was to stay on the roof and observe the approaching IDF troops.[[52]](#footnote-52)

F. N. was a member of a fireteam belonging to Hamas’s military wing that carried out armed guard duty to identify IDF troops approaching the Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The fireteam, whose members were masked, carried out its guard shifts during the night at a certain location near a mosque in the camp. Later, in 2007, F. N. engaged in terrorist activity on behalf of the PIJ.[[53]](#footnote-53) His participation may be indicative of the characteristics of the *murabitun* operatives: they are not necessarily Hamas’s top-rate cadre, but rather Gaza Strip residents recruited solely for border guard and observation tasks.

Muhammad 'Amur joined Hamas’s *usrah*,[[54]](#footnote-54) led by Ibrahim Sa'id al-'Amur, in 2005. About a year later, 'Amur served as a forward observer for Hamas, following IDF troop movements in the region and reporting on them to the same Ibrahim and another three operatives who were also members of his '*usrah*.[[55]](#footnote-55) In March 2006, Hamas operatives contacted Amin Abu Mu'amar, a resident of Rafah; based on their names, they seem to have been related to his family. They asked him to observe and report on IDF troop movements from the border into the Gaza Strip, and he agreed. It is worth noting that a year earlier, operatives from the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades had contacted Abu Mu'amar, asking him to work for them as a forward observer and report to them on the presence of the Israeli military on the border and any approach toward Abu Mu'amar’s house.[[56]](#footnote-56) Ramzi Abu Ridah, a Hamas member from the Khuza'ah region in the Gaza Strip, was part of a Hamas fireteam that awaited the arrival of IDF troops on September 6, 2006. The fireteam placed two explosive devices in the area where they anticipated the Israeli soldiers would pass, and monitored the approaching troops.[[57]](#footnote-57)

In mid-2006, a Hamas operative approached Muhammad Abu Shaluf and asked him to observe the movement of IDF troops that had entered the area of Dahaniya airport near Rafah. Abu Shaluf carried out this request once, reporting his findings in real time using his cell phone.[[58]](#footnote-58) In November 2007, Hamas operatives approached Fuaz Shaluf, who lived near the Rafah border crossing, and asked him to transmit information about Israeli troop movements near his home; at the time, he was waiting for a response to his application for a position in Hamas’s police organization. Shaluf carried out the mission and, on several occasions, submitted reports on Israeli army movement by phone. Interestingly, the Tanfidhiya, the force Fuaz Shaluf wanted to join, is a police force Hamas established for internal security affairs, but in practice it also engages in military actions against the IDF. This is manifested in many ways, including forward observation and surveillance of IDF movements and the transmission of reports to Hamas’s military wing.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Sa'id Harb was recruited in September 2006 to Hamas’s military wing. Afterwards, he and another operative went to the home of Muhammad al-Sufi, who was in charge of an observation team. He proposed that the two serve as forward observers and submit reports about IDF troops in the al-Shukha area (probably on Gaza City’s eastern outskirts) near Harb’s house. Harb agreed and was asked to report by cell phone on Israeli troop movements and any approach toward the border. al-Sufi then forwarded these reports to his superiors in Hamas. The period of forward observation lasted some four months, after which Harb underwent military training and seems to have become involved in military activities.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Around July 2007, Kamel Shaluf was asked to undertake forward observation from home, near the Dahaniya airport on the outskirts of Rafah, close to the border with Israel, to warn of IDF troop movement toward the airport and to surveil the troops’ activities. For eight months, he reported his findings to Hamas operative Jam'a 'Atiyha Shaluf by cell phone. It is not clear if this was part of the system of observation for basic and routine intelligence, or if the observation findings were passed to Jam'a in order to provide him early warning about the approach of the Israeli military and enable him to hide.[[61]](#footnote-61)

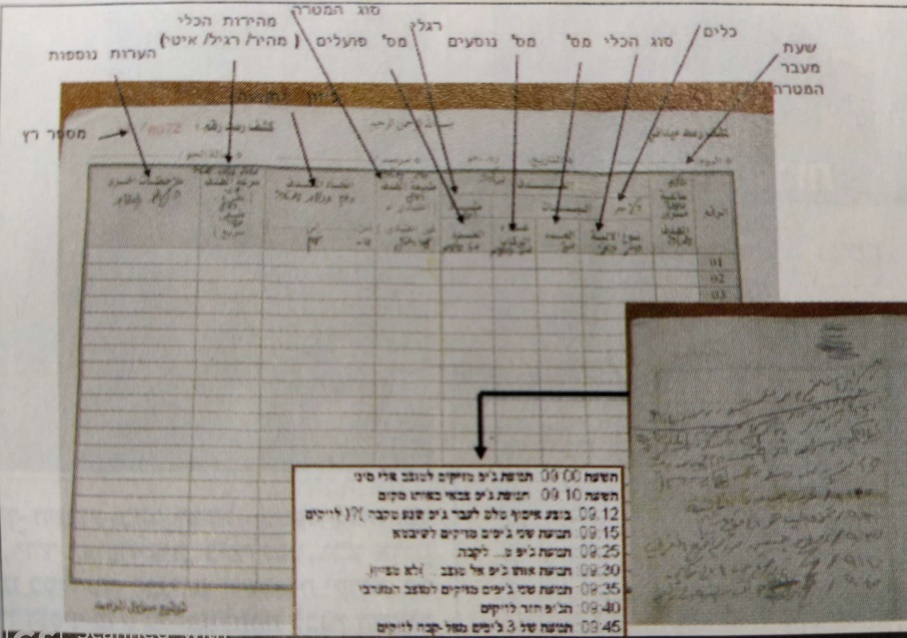
F. A., a Bait Hanun resident, participated in several attacks on IDF forces as a member of various organizations starting in 2001. In June 2007, four Hamas operatives contacted F. A. to ask him to observe IDF troop movements and report his findings to them by cell phone. They equipped him with a dedicated phone for this mission. His brother, S. A., too, agreed to undertake similar activity for Hamas; on at least two occasions, F. A. reported the findings of his forward observations to S. A., who submitted reports on Israeli tank movements to two of the operatives, Hamza Shahin and Muhammad al-Tatri. F. A. submitted his observations’ findings, which dealt primarily with tank movements and Israeli Air Force planes, by various means, including face-to-face meetings with Shahin. At this time, the fireteam led by Hamza was also involved in planting explosive devices in the Bait Hanun area that were to be detonated against the IDF. F. A. also served as the forward observer while the fireteam was laying the explosives, so that it would be possible to issue an early warning that IDF troops were approaching.[[62]](#footnote-62)

At the beginning of 2008, two members of Hamas’s military wing approached 'Imad Hamid, a Bait Hanun resident who lived near the border with Israel, and asked him to carry out forward observation of IDF troop movements from his home and present them with his reports. Hamid agreed to the arrangement, and did in fact carry out forward observations and pass on his findings to Hamas. These findings consisted primarily of reports on Israeli military incursions across the border into Bait Hanun.[[63]](#footnote-63) In an additional incident in February 2008, Zi'ad Abu Halib, a Hamas commander in charge of rockets in the southern Gaza Strip, contacted Amin 'Amawi, who two years prior had been a member of a fireteam with the Popular Front in which he had engaged in both forward observations and attacks on the IDF. Abu Halib asked 'Amawi to gather information about IDF troop movements in a certain area. 'Amawi agreed and carried out the task, but did not see any troop movements in the relevant area, a fact which he reported to Abu Halib.[[64]](#footnote-64) Likewise, Jihad Abu Hadid was recruited by 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 2009. He carried out *ribat* activities and served as deputy commander of a cell. Activity was carried out between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. During these hours, they would wait for Israeli soldiers and perform armed guard duty.[[65]](#footnote-65)

This sort of observation served both the *murabitun* unit described above and various operational needs of the military wing. Documentation of a *ribat* team from 2009 demonstrates the *murabitun*’s activities. The filmed *ribat* team consists of six members. They describe themselves as regular civilians with steady jobs who put on their military uniforms at night and carry out their *ribat* mission. First, Abu al-Hassan, the team commander, briefs the men, incorporating many Islamic references into his address. He divides areas of responsibility among the observers, e.g., one is in charge of the eastern side, a second the western, and a third the southern, backed by an operative whose role is to provide covering fire for the *ribat* team in case it is attacked and a battle with Israeli troops ensues. The *ribat* team members are equipped with tactical communications devices to communicate among themselves and with the command room. The *ribat* team’s commander describes the team’s function as patrolling the ground to identify and warn of any IDF incursion. *Murabitun* teams would assume their positions before the evening prayer, *maghrib*, and pray one after another so that at any given time, the whole team minus the one praying would be on forward observation duty.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Then, the film shows an example of a report provided by the patrol and observation teams: the team’s observer transmits under the name “Aqsa 1” to the command room called “al-Aqsa.” Depending on the command room’s response, the forward observer reports on his findings using code words recorded in tables known as*lum'i*.[[67]](#footnote-67) The team commander explains that operatives are now surveilling IDF vehicles and soldiers on the Gaza border and reporting on every move they see on the other side. Later, another forward observer, Abu Majd, states that he serves in the “forward observer” (*rasd mutakaddam*) unit, where his role is to surveil IDF movements, study IDF routines, and identify deviations from the routines. According to him, the data is transmitted to Hamas’s military headquarters, where it is processed into a report aimed at learning the features of Israel’s activities in the area. Later on, he is seen reporting to the command room that the situation is calm at the moment, both on the ground and in the air.[[68]](#footnote-68)

In the first decade of the new millennium, Hamas, in tandem with the *murabitun*, operated a dedicated forward observation system designed to undertake detailed surveillance of IDF troop activities. The organization’s observation logs, where the forward observers record the notes of their intelligence gathering, clearly indicate the level of detail of the observation and the meticulousness with which it was carried out, not just for real-time warnings but for basic and routine intelligence. For example, from the observation log discussed below, which seems to have been used in or around 2008, one can see what the forward observer must document during his mission: the exact time; the movement of vehicles, including vehicle types, identification numbers, and number of passengers; and the number of soldiers on foot as well as their identification numbers. An additional observation log, pictured below, was kept by a Hamas operative from the northern Gaza Strip (the Zikim region and eastwards), and documents IDF troop activities. Every three to five minutes, the observer scrupulously records what he sees: a Jeep leaving Zikim for the Elei Sinai outpost (he seems to mean the outpost located as the crow flies opposite Elei Sinai, evacuated in the 2005 disengagement); exactly what time the Jeep returns to Zikim; the movement of two Jeeps from Zikim to “the western outpost,” apparently an outpost located near the beach.[[69]](#footnote-69)



1.1 From the observation log of a Hamas operative. Photograph from *Bamahaneh*, July 2, 2010.

Another Hamas observation log, dated 2014, also demonstrates the organized and detailed manner in which forward observation was carried out. The top of the page has spaces for the observer to write his name, his brigade and regiment, the date the observation was performed, and its starting and ending times. He is also required to note the weather that day: foggy, rainy, overcast, or sunny. In the chart itself, the observer fills out the type of activity he sees, the composition of the troops, their numbers (probably the number of vehicles and/or the number of people inside), their points of ingress and egress, their assembly point, and the direction of the movement. Later, he must list all the details relevant to the observed action. The bottom of the page includes instructions for the observer. He must write down every detail he sees, both inside the vehicle and outside of it, for the entire length of the route. He must write down details about the ambushes, their duration, and their precise location, and do the same for every other action, whether carried out routinely or those identified as anomalous. It is also stressed that every log page must be filled out by a single observer; two may not fill in the same page.[[70]](#footnote-70)

It seems that the observation activity, even if it includes reports in real time, is used by Hamas to generate an in-depth, basic, and routine analysis of IDF activity by means of a central unit, apparently the Military Intelligence Department (MOD). This is evident in the fact that the observer logs his brigade and regiments, as well as information about the weather, clearly necessary to organize the data into a feasible basis for analysis. It is worth noting that the findings of daily observations were collated into a special report managed by the existing observation unit in every regiment.[[71]](#footnote-71)

In audio documentation of Hamas’s communications network from early 2020, the organization’s forward observers report on border events in real time. This is instructive with regard to Hamas intelligence-gathering processes. Using previously arranged call signals, operatives report on rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and the consequent Israeli aerial attacks; they map the aerial situation and the number of planes currently circling over the Gaza Strip, and hence enter a state of “defensive alert” – instructing operatives to avoid using cars or motorcycles and evacuate buildings on the basis of a set, pre-arranged procedure. To supplement the situation assessment, traffic over the communications devices includes updates on the situation from the Israeli media.[[72]](#footnote-72)

Forward observation was not only carried out from the Gaza Strip but also from Sinai. In 2011, Muhammad Abu 'Adarah, who had moved to Sinai a few month earlier, was recruited by Rashdi Abu 'Adarah, a member of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam from Rafah. Rashdi reached out to Muhammad; over the course of several meetings, they arrived at the conclusion that Muhammad would become a forward observer for Hamas’s observation apparatus under the supervision of Yunus Abu Shaluf, Hamas’s forward observation supervisor for the Rafah area, who participated in one of their meetings. Muhammad was asked to transmit information about IDF troop movement on the Israeli-Egyptian border, the city of Eilat, and the Taba border crossing, and visually document his observations with a camera. The intelligence-gathering task was presented in great detail, including marked outposts of interest along the border. It was explained to Muhammad that the objective of this task was the abduction of and/or armed attacks against Israeli citizens. Muhammad, accompanied and assisted by Rashdi, received a GPS device and a video camera. The two did in fact carry out the forward observation mission, and, helped by smugglers crossing the border (generally drug smugglers), they entered Israel and filmed the Har Keren outpost, the military airfield near Eilat, and the city itself. After the operation, Rashdi returned the GPS device (now marked with locations) to Abu Shaluf, along with clips recorded on the video camera.[[73]](#footnote-73)

After this mission, Muhammed met with Abu Shaluf, and both had a meeting with a senior Hamas operative who called himself 'Atar (it is very likely that this was Ra'id al-'Atar) in the southern Gaza Strip. Muhammad presented his findings, including the locations marked on the GPS device and the video he had taken. In light of his success, Muhammad was given another mission in which he conducted forward observations at close range on an IDF outpost and lookout point in Kerem Shalom, as well as on an IDF outpost on the Israeli-Egyptian border located opposite Quseima. The findings of this mission, too, were submitted to Abu Shaluf.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Forward observation was carried out not only in order to learn about the IDF’s routine and issue warnings; observation tasks were also incorporated into the operations of combat teams. On January 15, 2008, Hamas fired on Israelis in the area of Ein Hashlosha, a kibbutz near the Gaza border, wounding several farmers working there and killing one foreign worker. A few days later, Hamas released photos of its operatives observing and surveilling a vehicle and the people exiting it just before the incident, and Hamas’s al-Aqsa channel showed a video taken from the Israeli media in which those attacked can be heard saying, “They know exactly where we are.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

In addition, the use of forward observers in sniper teams became part of the organization’s doctrine of warfare. The definition of the function of the forward observer in sniper actions is to help choose and focus fire on the target; he is also armed to provide additional security for the sniper. The Hamas sniper instruction manual gives detailed instructions for observation and surveillance in order to make sure that the highest-quality target is chosen and fire can be pinpointed. Targets considered high-quality, at whom the forward observer should direct sniper action, include IDF command officers, tank commanders, forward observers, military intelligence personnel, and snipers. A long chapter in the manual is devoted to proper execution of nighttime forward observation, such as taking advantage of light sources and thermal imaging tools, as well as warnings against the use of infrared means, because the IDF has the capacity to identify a sniper’s location through these means.[[76]](#footnote-76) A sniper team of this kind was documented during Operation Protective Edge in 2014, ready to do battle with IDF troops. The team consisted of a sniper and an operative in charge of anti-tank fire. Its members are seen carrying out forward observation using binoculars, paying particular interest to the IDF’s observation tower on the border fence.[[77]](#footnote-77)

Alongside the development of Hamas’s forward observation apparatus in the Gaza Strip, as part of the institutionalization of the organization after Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Hamas continued forward observation activities in the West Bank with the same characteristics as before the disengagement: tactical and localized intelligence gathering. On March 5, 2008, a Hamas cell from the West Bank, whose members included Muhammad Jabbar, Ra'id Harub, Muhammad Harub, and Bahaa' al-Din al-'Adim, carried out a fire attack at the Idna Junction in which one man was killed and another wounded. Before the operation, the cell carried out intelligence gathering that included forward observations of the location. Based on forward observation and on Harub’s statement that he knew of a Jewish man who came to the observed location frequently, the cell members identified a skullcap-wearing Jewish man who came to the area to sell vehicles. He was subsequently targeted for attack. The next day, the cell members returned for further observation and saw that, in fact, that the same Jewish man arrived at the location at a similar time as the day before. On the day of the attack, two of the cell members were sent ahead to gather concrete information on the Jewish man’s presence; when they located him, they signaled the other cell members that the attack could be carried out.[[78]](#footnote-78)

It is worth noting that about an hour before the attack, Ali Yunis, another individual recruited by the cell for this attack, made sure the road leading to the designated site of the attack was clear of police, army troops, or Israeli security services’ roadblocks. Yunis carried out his task, reporting to the cell members in real time that the area was in fact clear of Israeli forces. The same sweep was also carried out after the attack, when the cell’s vehicle sped away from the scene. Yunis carried out similar sweeps for the cell on additional occasions.[[79]](#footnote-79)

In 2010, Muhammad 'Jabbar’s cell executed other attacks. In one case, cell members wanted to carry out a live fire attack on IDF soldiers manning a guard tower in the al-Fuar region. They gathered preliminary intelligence, but after forward observation concluded that such an attack was not feasible and gave up on the idea. In early June 2010, they planned a live fire attack on the road around al-Fuar. They made five preliminary trips to gather intelligence on the location and identified a police van as a good target for attack, because it drove down the route at the same time every day and carried a relatively large number of people. On June 14, 2010, the cell carried out the attack, killing one policeman and injuring three.[[80]](#footnote-80)

In June 2015, Rajib 'Ilawiyah, a West Bank Hamas operative, began to form a cell aimed at carrying out attacks on Israeli targets. After the arson of a home in Duma on July 31, 2015, an attack attributed to Jews, the cell decided to embark on a revenge operation. Over the month of August, two cell members, independently of one another, carried out forward observation of the road in the Bait Furik and Bait Dajan areas to investigate the possibility of executing the attack there. They reported to Rajib that there was no Israeli security presence along the road, and consequently fired at an Israeli vehicle. Later that month, the cell members wanted to orchestrate an attack on Jewish civilians coming to the 'Ayn Farah/Ein Prat natural spring. They conducted forward observation and documented the physical features of the area to prepare for the attack; once they realized that Arab residents of the area also visited the site, however, they abandoned the idea. In the same period, they also weighed the possibility of an attack at Joseph’s Tomb, but while gathering preliminary intelligence, they identified significant Israeli security activity there, and the plans were put aside.[[81]](#footnote-81)

On October 1, 2015, a Hamas cell carried out a live fire attack at the Bait Furik junction in the West Bank. The attack took place after preliminary intelligence gathering that included daytime forward observation of the area. In the evening, cell member Zi'ad 'Amar was put in charge of making sure the road was clear before the attack. To do so, he drove along the road leading to the Bait Furik checkpoint to identify Israeli security forces liable to thwart the attack and reported his findings to the operational cell, which then carried out the attack.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Zi'ad 'Awad, a Hamas operative, was imprisoned in Israel in 2000 after he killed three men suspected of collaboration with Israel. He was released in November 2011 in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange and returned to the ranks of Hamas. He enlisted his son, 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam 'Awad, and the two started to plan an operation in early 2014, even managing to acquire weapons. At the same time, they began to gather intelligence. About a month before the Jewish holiday of Passover, Zi'ad told his son that the ideal timing for the attack would be during the holiday, when there is considerable Jewish traffic along West Bank roads. The two went to the Suba area, located near a Jewish settlement, to carry out forward observation, and selected a route to observe from the top of a nearby hill. The next day, they went to another area, also near a Jewish settlement. Zi'ad brought binoculars, and the two watched the settlement from a nearby hill; they then descended and approached the settlement in order to distinguish between Israeli and Palestinian vehicles driving along the route. The two also observed the entrance gate of the settlement and the vehicles that entered. On the third day, the two went to observe the same location again, and they discussed their options: this place did not make it possible to clearly distinguish between Israeli and Palestinian vehicles, and therefore they had to scout another location for their planned operation.[[83]](#footnote-83)

Several days later, the operatives approached the security fence near Idna, and, using binoculars, carried out forward observation of the Israeli security forces there. However, they noticed that it was impossible to determine the routine of the vehicles there and saw that there were security cameras scattered throughout the area. Therefore, this location, too, was rejected. Over the conversation between father and son, the option was proposed to carry out the attack on the Idna-Abu Dis route; 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam had identified military vehicles there that were potential targets. However, the site was not selected because of its distance from the village of Idna, to which the two planned to flee. On April 3, 2014, 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam did an internet search for the dates of Passover to select the precise date for the planned attack. On April 9, the two traveled to a plot of land belonging to their family, located near the Tarqumiyah-Hebron road, to engage in forward observation with binoculars. They practiced quick differentiation between Israeli and Palestinian vehicles based on three parameters – the color of the license plate, the passengers’ appearance, and the vehicle type – so that they would only fire on Israeli vehicles. They agreed that, on the day of the attack, 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam would act as forward observer. Using code words to report on passing vehicles, he would identify the cars and issue early warning that an Israeli car was approaching. In the end, Zi'ad himself carried out the attack on April 14. In the course of the attack, a police chief superintendent was killed and several civilians were injured.[[84]](#footnote-84)

**Hamas’s Development and Use of UAVs**

Hamas started to take an interest in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and drones before 2010. This, too, contributed to the organization’s GEOINT capabilities. The most significant player in the development of drones was Muhammad al-Zuari, an aeronautical engineer from Tunisia. According to a classmate, from his first days at the university in Tunisia, al-Zuari was recognized as a brilliant mind who excelled in his studies. Nonetheless, because of his extensive activity against the Tunisian regime, he was forced to abandon his studies and go into hiding in 1991. He managed to get a passport under another name – Murad – and donned voluminous clothing to give himself the chubby appearance of the individual in his fake passport photograph. Thus, he crossed the border into Libya, then entered Sudan, where he managed to get citizenship. He hid his real identity from everyone who knew him, including his wife, to whom he revealed his true identity only eighteen months after their wedding. As he was skilled in engineering, he found work as an engineer in a wood manufacturing plant in Sudan. Later, the plant was sold and refitted to manufacture military equipment. al-Zuari continued to work there and started to accrue engineering knowledge for military purposes. In 2006, al-Zuari moved to Syria, where he first met members of the military wing of Hamas and was enlisted to its ranks.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Abu Muhammad, a member of Hamas’s drone unit, recalls that, from the moment al-Zuari joined the organization, he demonstrated engineering capabilities and computer skills, as well as experience from his past work in various Arab countries. In fact, his abilities were well suited to many technological projects envisioned by Hamas. The organization’s drone capabilities were then in their infancy, with operatives testing small, basic versions of aerial vehicles. Hamas thought that al-Zuari was the man who could help the organization make the leap to the next level. At the same time, the Hamas drone project received support from a senior Iraqi officer who had completed his doctorate at the University of Baghdad; in fact, his dissertation was on the manufacturing of drones, which he called SMs – S for Saddam Hussein and M for the initial of his given name. He shared his knowledge of drones with the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades for purely ideological reasons, based on his support for the Palestinian cause. al-Zuari and his team jumped at the opportunity and took advantage of the Iraqi expert to expand their own knowledge and make advances in their project. al-Zuari was actively involved in experiments with drones. In the experiment with Hamas’s first model, a project he headed (“the Iraqi plane project”), al-Zuari can be seen closely examining the experiment and watching the vehicle rise into the air, guided by a joystick on the ground. His presence is also notable in additional experiments later in the process.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Another operative in Hamas’s drone unit testifies that, in those years, Hamas’s military wing contacted Iran for help in developing its aerial capabilities. In approximately 2007–2008, al-Zuari and his team traveled to Iran to test the waters with regard to possible collaboration in the field. They met with Iranian developers, who were enthusiastic about helping the project and advancing Hamas’s efforts. The Iranian developers discovered that Hamas had reached a more advanced development stage and had amassed more experience than they had thought. At that stage, Hamas was already able to build an independent drone and fly it manually. Therefore, the Iranians formulated a three-stage development plan for the Hamas team – flight, command, and communications – followed by manufacturing. This plan was estimated to last a year. In practice, it took Hamas only half that time because of al-Zuari’s and the other team members’ skills, as well as their harmonious working relationship with the Iranian experts. By the time of Operation Cast Lead in December 2008, the manufacturing team had made some 30 drones at the Iranian plant.[[87]](#footnote-87)

After the successful production of the UAVs in Syria and Iran, Hamas decided to bring al-Zuari to the Gaza Strip. Abu Mujahid, another member of the drone team, says that in tandem with the activities of al-Zuari’s team outside the Gaza Strip, another Hamas team was working on a drone development program called Buraq; it, too, was making great strides, and the two teams exchanged information and knowledge. al-Zuari’s expertise helped the Buraq team overcome technical difficulties in the development process. After the revolution in Tunisia at the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011, al-Zuari was finally able to return to his homeland. He went back to the university where he had started his studies before being forced to flee; there, he completed his degree, and was again recognized by his peers and instructors as a brilliant engineer. During this time, al-Zuari paid the Gaza Strip two more visits in 2012 and 2013. In total, he spent about nine months there until the Buraq project was completed. On December 15, 2016, unidentified individuals assassinated al-Zuari in Tunisia. The operation was attributed to Israel.[[88]](#footnote-88)

In official Hamas publications from 2014, it is evident that the organization possessed at least 3 UAV models of the Ababil1 type: The first, the A1A model, is designed for observation missions. In the film demonstrating its capabilities, the drone is seen flying to conduct observation along the coastline and, later, inside Israeli territory. While flying, it films Israeli settlements and agricultural areas in full color. The other two models, the A1B and A1C, are – according to Hamas – designed for attack missions (either by dropping bombs or by blowing themselves up above the target) – and it seems that their observation capabilities are limited.[[89]](#footnote-89)

Hamas’s first launch against Israel occurred during Operation Protective Edge. On July 14, 2014, a Hamas UAV made it all the way to the Ashdod city beach, where it was identified and intercepted by IDF anti-aircraft forces. Hamas claimed it had launched two more UAVs the same day, that one had reached Tel Aviv and even captured video over the Kiryah military base, and that at least one of the UAVs had been the Ababil1 model. While one individual testified that he had seen a suspicious aerial vehicle in the Tel Aviv region, Hamas’s report on its drone’s successful flight over Tel Aviv was never confirmed in Israel. In December 2014, during the march commemorating the 27th anniversary of the organization’s founding, Hamas launched a UAV that documented the march from its video camera as part of a show of military strength.[[90]](#footnote-90)

On June 25, 2015, Hamas launched another UAV at Israel, though this time it was not along the coast but rather along Israel’s border fence. It flew as far as the border fence and then crashed. As no explosives were found on the UAV, it was suggested that its purpose was intelligence gathering. On September 20, 2016, a Hamas UAV moved along the Gaza coastline near the Israeli border; it was intercepted before it had a chance to fly into Israeli airspace. On February 23, 2017, another Hamas UAV was launched from the Gaza Strip. It flew past the Gaza Strip’s territorial waters to the sea, where it was intercepted by an Israeli fighter plane.[[91]](#footnote-91)

In 2016, a Hamas UAV was launched at the border with Israel to locate tunnel digging on the Israeli side of the border. This was the result of concerns by Basil Salahiyyah, a Hamas member, whose suspicion had been aroused by certain findings from the organization’s activities in cyberspace.[[92]](#footnote-92) According to Salahiyyah, the launch did in fact confirm his suspicions, presenting the organization with evidence of such digging. Salahiyyah subsequently published a photo to show what had been captured by cameras during that sortie.[[93]](#footnote-93)

It should be noted that Hamas UAVs and drones have yet to be extensively tested on the battlefield. Hamas continues to work on their development from time to time, as demonstrated above, and to use them occasionally during routine security operations, but there is no way to estimate the extent to which the organization will be able to deploy them effectively during a large-scale confrontation with Israel. Even in May 2021, in the most recent round of fighting at the time of this writing, Hamas UAVs were not used to any significant degree, perhaps because Hamas prefers to preserve them for the next campaign in which Israeli ground troops enter the Gaza Strip.

**Conclusion**

Hamas’s GEOINT activity dates back to the earliest stages of its existence. This appears to have been the most accessible method by which to obtain intelligence in a simple, unmediated fashion. As such, this method of basic observation was suited to the organization’s general approach at the time, as it largely engaged in attacks and tactical actions against Israeli civilians and security personnel. The fact that combat took place over a long period of time, when soldiers were present for extended periods on Hamas’s “home court” in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, also affected Hamas’s preference for GEOINT collection. Furthermore, Hamas operatives’ intimate familiarity with the territory was highly advantageous to the organization, as was their ability to carry out forward observation from home and during seemingly routine comings and goings in the field.

Forward observation allowed Hamas to obtain valuable intelligence about the location of Israeli forces, the characteristics of IDF activity, and the army’s routine traffic and movement in the region. Although the GEOINT in question in this period was fairly basic, and was gathered by the members of the operational cell themselves rather than by a dedicated intelligence department or skilled intelligence operatives, accurate forward observation and tracking provided enough relevant intelligence to facilitate the successful execution of attacks.

With the passage of time, and especially after the mid-2000s, forward observation became increasingly professionalized and institutionalized in the Gaza Strip. From local forward observation by operatives from a certain sector for immediate, specific needs, Hamas’s forward observation gradually became more organized. Hamas apparatuses conducted forward observations all along the line of conflict in the Gaza Strip, systematically documented the observations’ findings, and transmitted the data to various parties in the organization so that they could draw the relevant conclusions for Hamas’s needs.

Incremental development also took place in the means of observation. At first, observations were conducted with the naked eye or with simple field binoculars useful only for short distances. Gradually, the organization began to use more professional observation tools that enabled forward observation of more distant locations. At the same time, Hamas invested and continues to invest significant resources into developing UAVs and drones, having realized that these tools can gather important GEOINT beyond the reach of the organization’s usual means of forward observation. Moreover, the use of such tools has a powerful effect on public opinion and morale in Hamas’s propaganda campaign, as it shows that the organization’s military capabilities are somehow capable of matching the advanced UAV squads Israel has operated for years against Hamas.

**Chapter 2: Human Intelligence (HUMINT)**

**HUMINT Until the Mid-2000s**

Hamas’s HUMINT activity until the mid-2000s, before Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the institutionalization of the Hamas military wing, was not organized and was conducted on the basis of local initiatives. As is evident from the examples below, it consisted primarily of recruiting individuals with access to Israel to gather tactical intelligence. The following instances, drawn mainly from court records and official Israeli sources, illustrate Hamas’s methods of HUMINT operation during this period.

Nazmi Hussein, an Israeli citizen from the Galilee, was a dentistry student in Cluj, Romania in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During his time in Romania, he regularly attended the local mosque. There, he met two men, 'Ali Matar and Khalid Abu-'Arab, who suggested in late 1993 that he enlist in an Islamic organization and carry out operations for the organization in Israel; to this end, he would have to undergo training in Turkey. Hussein agreed. In April 1994,[[94]](#footnote-94) he flew to Turkey, where he met with members of Hamas. For five days, Hussein and several other operatives underwent security training that covered a range of subjects, including information gathering, surveillance, and message encryption, as well as the preparation of explosives. After returning to Romania, he met with his handlers from Hamas, who asked him to help gather information about locations in Israel and recruit additional Israeli Arab citizens for the organization’s activities. In 1997, a Hamas figure with the code name of Bashar arrived in Israel to meet Hussein and discuss the nature of the assistance Hussein would give Hamas. By 1999, the relationship became more personal, and Hussein was asked to recruit another Israeli Arab to the organization. Hussein gave the names of two other Israeli Arabs who had studied with him in Romania, and offered to help with the recruitment of his friend 'Abd al-Islam Zidan.[[95]](#footnote-95)

After meeting with Bashar, Hussein saw Zidan in secret and suggested that he participate in activity on behalf of Hamas. Zidan agreed, whereupon Hussein arranged for Zidan to meet Bashar. At this and another meeting, Zidan was asked to find rental apartments in Kafr Manda, an Arab town in the lower Galilee, for Hamas to house operatives and store equipment. Later, in July 1999, the two met again in Turkey, where Zidan was again asked to find apartments for rent, buy fertilizer (used as an explosive), and identify other Israeli Arabs who could be recruited to the ranks of Hamas. During his stay in Turkey, Zidan received Hamas training in the preparation and transmission of dispatches, as well as the encryption of information. Zidan also served as a Hamas courier, taking with him hundreds of dollars for organization operatives in Israel. In August 2002, Zidan went to Saudi Arabia for 'Umrah, the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah; there, he met Bashar once again. At this meeting, Zidan was explicitly instructed to gather information for Hamas about sites in Tel Aviv and Haifa with substantial foot traffic, especially malls, large buildings, and marketplaces. The information requested from Zidan included access routes, business hours, and layouts (including sketches), as well as photographs of the sites.[[96]](#footnote-96) While it cannot be stated with certainty, it is likely that Zidan managed to carry out this mission before his arrest by Israeli security forces in the summer of 2005.

An additional instance involved Khadir Shala'tah, a resident of Sakhnin, an Arab city in northern Israel. In 2001, after completing three years of study at al-Iyarmuk University in Irbid, Jordan, Shala'tah met Hamas operative I'ad Safarini. In 2002, Safarini offered to pay for Shala'tah to go on 'Umrah in Makkah. The arrangement was postponed once because of Shala'tah’s studies; eventually, however, in August 2002, the plan went into effect. In Makkah, when the two met, Safarini told Shala'tah that he was a member of Hamas, and that it was actually Hamas that had paid for Shala'tah’s trip. At Safarini’s request, Shala'tah agreed to work for Hamas. Safarini explained that Shala'tah was required to pass a security course, and gave him code words for use in future communications. In 2003, Shala'tah traveled to Amman, where he completed the course and agreed to recruit new operatives to the organization. In Israel, Shala'tah in fact worked to connect Safarini to Israeli students attending school in Jordan.[[97]](#footnote-97)

One of the students recruited by Shala'tah was Rami Hiadri, who also lived in Sakhnin. Hiadri had been living in Irbid since June 2002, studying at one of the universities in the city. Shala'tah met Hiadri in Irbid; he told Hiadri about his own recruitment to work for Hamas and the course he had completed, and suggested to Hiadri that he too participate in activities for the organization. Hiadri was asked to help conduct forward observation of Israeli buses and their travel times. It was also suggested that Hiadri go on 'Umrah in September 2003 in order to meet with a Hamas operative. He agreed in principle, but after a few weeks told Shala'tah that financial difficulties prevented him from going on the pilgrimage.

Another of Shala'tah’s recruits was Amin Hassan, who had completed his studies at al-Iyarmuk University in 2001 and returned to Israel. Shala'tah introduced him to Safarini, whereupon Hassan went on an 'Umrah financed by Safarini. In Makkah, Safarini met Hassan and revealed his organizational affiliation. Hassan agreed to serve as a courier for Hamas, carrying money and dispatches from Jordan to Israel. Like Shala'tah, Hassan was given code words for future communications. Hassan also met another Hamas operative, going by the name of Tarik, who described to Hassan the activities that would be expected of him and the nature of the course he would take in Turkey. Hassan’s training included materials on surveillance methods and surveillance detection, the clandestine use of phones, and the gathering of data on public locations in Israel. He remained in contact with Safarini after his return to Israel. At least in Hassan’s case, it is possible that actual information gathering took place as a result of these activities; it is suspected that he contacted a student from Haifa and a Jewish friend in Tel Aviv to help acquaint him with locations in these areas. He also traveled to the new Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv to gather information about the site.[[98]](#footnote-98)

In 2001, Hamas recruited 'Abd Ma'lwani for HUMINT purposes. Ma'lwani, an Israeli citizen, completed high school at an Israeli institution and enrolled at An-Najah National University in Nablus. At the university, he met someone who introduced himself as a Hamas operative; after an initial conversation, they decided to stay in touch. Subsequently, Ma'lwani and his friend from Umm al-Fahm met with the Hamas operative several times on campus. Starting in May 2001, the three began to discuss an attack on an Israeli target. Ma'lwani and his friend were asked to perform a number of support activities for attacks, including forward observation. They were also told to target a specific bank in the city of Hadera on a day that many Israelis would arrive at the bank in order to collect Social Security. In the end, Ma'lwani’s friend bowed out, so Ma'lwani was asked to recruit other operatives from Umm al-Fahm for the attack. The attack was never carried out, because both were arrested in time (August 2001) by Israeli security forces.[[99]](#footnote-99)

Around 2002, a Hamas operative named Ayman Nadi approached Bakir Shaikhah and asked him to gather information for an attack about a particular bus stop in the French Hill neighborhood of Jerusalem. Shaikhah was asked to observe the location where the passengers waited for buses, as well as the placement of the security guards. He agreed to undertake the mission, which he carried out two days later, subsequently passing his findings on to Nadi. In the end, the attack did not take place.[[100]](#footnote-100)

In October 2003, Basil Mahajnah, a resident of Umm al-Fahm, traveled to al-Aqsa Mosque, where he met Jamal Badawi, a Hamas operative from the Hebron area. Badawi recruited Mahajnah to work on behalf of Hamas, helping to carry out attacks. In March 2004, Mahajnah was told to provide Badawi with information about possible targets with large concentrations of Jews for potential suicide attacks. Among Mahajnah’s recommendations was bus line no. 842, which ran from the northern city of Kiryat Shmona to Tel Aviv with a stop in 'Afula and tended to carry many soldiers. Mahajnah also told Badawi about two other potential targets: the home of an Israeli pilot for whom he had briefly worked, and a mall in Kiryat Shmona. In addition, Badawi asked Mahajnah to recruit more men from Umm al-Fahm to work for Hamas, and requested that he obtain Israeli identity cards. Basil Mahajnah agreed; he asked Nijam Mahajnah to join Hamas, but the latter refused.[[101]](#footnote-101)

Zahir Dhihab 'Ali, a resident of Kawkab in northern Israel, was working as a math teacher in Bait Safafa while studying for his MA at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Over the year 2004, he grew acquainted with Na'il Jald, a resident of Abu Tor, who happened to be a Hamas operative. After some months, in June 2004, 'Ali came to an agreement with Jald to help Hamas carry out attacks, especially by providing the information needed to conduct “high-quality” attacks. The suicide bombers who were supposed to perform these attacks were already prepared for the mission; all that was left was to choose the target. 'Ali and Jald started gathering information preliminary to the attacks. It is apparent that their motive was identification with Hamas’s desire to harm Jews.[[102]](#footnote-102)

On a daily basis throughout June–July 2004, as part of the information-gathering process, the two scouted out locations 'Ali knew from living, working, and studying in Jerusalem. They identified the café at Hebrew University as an appropriate target; specifically, 'Ali proposed to carry out an attack on members of the Talpiyot honors program for Air Force soldiers studying at the university. On these reconnaissance missions, 'Ali suggested bus no. 4A in Jerusalem. Accordion buses were used for this line, thus increasing the potential for a mass-casualty attack. He indicated a specific bus stop on the route as one that tended to be busy, and another as providing a convenient escape route to take before the detonation of the explosive device left on the bus. Other sites identified by 'Ali and Jald included a café next to Liberty Bell Park, shops and restaurants on Emek Refaim Street, a strip mall in Ramat Eshkol, and a wedding venue in the Bait Safafa area. The two also discussed the appropriate time to carry out attacks at these sites based on the times at which they had observed that the locations were particularly crowded. In order to gather additional information, Hamas operatives posed as customers at the café that had been selected as a target. Ultimately, on July 11, 2004, Jald’s cell tried to carry out an attack at Caffit, one of the cafés he and 'Ali had designated. However, the operative, who was equipped with both an explosive device and a gun, failed to carry out his mission.[[103]](#footnote-103)

'Ali also used his familiarity with northern Israel, where he had lived for most of his life, to transmit intelligence to Hamas personnel before the attack. He suggested an attack on soldiers at the Golani Junction to Jald. Together with Jald, he made observations from the roof of his home. He showed Jald a security site in the Galilee as a possible target for attack, suggesting that he shoot live fire at buses departing the site at the end of the workday; he also suggested that the attackers conceal themselves in an old structure within the site as a base for staging the attack. The two even toured the area near the site, and Jald took pictures.[[104]](#footnote-104) In 2004, near the end of the period under discussion in this section, Lui Abu Dalu, a Bait Safafa resident studying medicine in Cairo, was contacted by a Hamas operative from Gaza named Muhammad Tariya. Tariya asked him to identify a suitable location for an attack and abduction of Jews in Jerusalem, but the recruitment did not pan out.[[105]](#footnote-105)

Thus, it is evident that, during this period, Hamas tried to recruit human sources to undertake information gathering and other necessary covert missions. Most of this activity occurred as the result of local initiatives; with a few exceptions, it did not last very long. From the mid-2000s, with the institutionalization of Hamas, the organization’s HUMINT activity became more institutionalized and of higher quality, as will be discussed below.

**HUMINT from the Mid-2000s**

After the disengagement from the Gaza Strip, Hamas became a more institutionalized organization and developed its military and security aspects; this transition was manifested in a palpable improvement in Hamas’s HUMINT activity, both in scope and in quality. For example, in 2007, while I'ad Abu 'Arjah was on Hajj in Makkah, his old friend Salih al-Tamuni introduced him to a Hamas operative named Abu Nazmi. Abu 'Arjah, who was living in Saudi Arabia, held dual Australian-Jordanian citizenships. At the meeting, Abu Nazmi suggested that Abu 'Arjah help Hamas, and probed him on his knowledge of encryption. Abu 'Arjah demurred, but said that, as a computer geek, he would try to find out about encryption. Abu Nazmi gave Abu 'Arjah the code name Bashar, and the two decided that future communication between them would be conducted through al-Tamuni. After attempting to learn encryption, Abu 'Arjah informed al-Tamuni that the subject was too complex for him and that he could not be of any more help. al-Tamuni then arranged for a Hamas emissary to come to Riyad to meet with Abu 'Arjah. Such an emissary indeed arrived to debrief Abu 'Arjah about his life and activities.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Throughout 2009 and 2010, al-Tamuni asked Abu 'Arjah to acquire encrypted technologies, such as encrypted mobile devices, panoramic photography devices, and technologies that plotted data points for rocket guidance. Abu 'Arjah agreed to the request and tried to source the technologies. He was finally able to buy al-Tamuni a tripod and panoramic camera. During this period, Abu 'Arjah was also asked to find an Israeli with dual Australian-Israeli citizenship for Hamas recruitment. In 2010, in the month of Ramadan, a different Hamas emissary acting under the code name Dr. Barhan came to Makkah in collaboration with al-Tamuni. Dr. Barhan gave Abu 'Arjah a new code name.[[107]](#footnote-107)

In 2011, Abu 'Arjah wanted to visit Israel; he informed al-Tamuni and Abu Nazmi of his plans. After a failed attempt to hold a preliminary meeting in Syria, Dr. Barhan arrived in Riyad, where Abu 'Arjah was asked to pay close attention to his treatment at the Israeli airport on arrival and upon departure and see if he aroused suspicion. He was also told to attend several computer and high-tech expos during his stay in Israel and contact Israeli companies. He was also instructed to wander through commercial centers and photograph them, as well as to collect maps and materials about tour routes. At this meeting, Abu 'Arjah handed over the panoramic photography equipment he had purchased for Hamas to Dr. Barhan. Abu 'Arjah was arrested immediately after landing in Israel on March 24, 2011.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Jerusalem resident Murad Kamal was a pharmacy student in Jordan when he was recruited to Hamas’s military wing by Murad Nimr, also Jerusalem-born, whom he had known since their days as high school classmates. After Kamal finished his studies in Jordan, he moved to Dubai for work and maintained contact with Nimr and other Hamas operatives in Turkey. In June 2009, Nimr was sent on a Hamas mission to gather information about locations in Israel, including major highways, and he invited Kamal to join him. During June of 2009, the two traveled through Israel every weekend by car; they were chauffeured by Nimr’s cousin, as neither Kamal nor Nimr had a driver’s license. They told the cousin that they were gathering information for an academic project. During these outings, they noted the major roads (the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, the Trans-Israel highway, the old and new coastal highways, the Trans-Samaria highway, and Route 3) and took over 100 photos. In August 2009, Nimr left for Saudi Arabia, where he passed the information on to Hamas operatives. He was paid for his work and received money for future missions.[[109]](#footnote-109)

In November 2009, the two switched to traveling by motorcycle; Kamal had made a point of taking motorcycle lessons specifically for this purpose. Two days after passing his road test, the two started driving across Israel, observing the Central Bus Station and the French Hill bus stop in Jerusalem, as well as additional heavily trafficked locations elsewhere in the country. They entered various sites to evaluate the guards and test the level of security, and took video of the places they visited. After editing the video and adding other data, including maps and aerial photos, they prepared to transmit the information to Hamas personnel in Turkey. In January 2010, the two were arrested by Israeli security forces.[[110]](#footnote-110)

An additional example of successful recruitment by Hamas was that of Islam Mar'i. In June 2010, Ibrahim Kisab, a Hamas operative from the Jericho area, recruited Mar'i, a former classmate from Hebron University’s Kutlah Islamiyah.[[111]](#footnote-111) Mar'i, an Israeli citizen from Furadis, was asked to gather information about sites where large numbers of Jews assembled in order to perform an attack on those sites. Mar'i was also told to recruit another Israeli citizen who would serve as the intermediary between him and Kisab, thus reducing the risk that the Shin Bet would suspect that contact between Kisab and Mar'i had been renewed (Mar'i was banned from entering the West Bank). Mar'i agreed; he attempted to recruit Ahmad Abu al-Khauf from Dir Hana, in part to help him gather information. But because al-Khauf refused, Mar'i did not fulfill his mission.[[112]](#footnote-112)

Hamas also worked to recruit figures with better access to valuable information for the organization. In 1992, Hamas obtained a foothold in humanitarian institutions when the teachers’ committee at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) elected as its head Sa'id Siyam, the son-in-law of Shaikh Yassin, who would later serve as Hamas’s minister of internal affairs from January 2006. A number of figures in the IDF’s military government in the West Bank warned that UNRWA institutions might gradually be overtaken by Hamas, a situation of which the UNRWA leadership was well aware and making no efforts to stop.[[113]](#footnote-113) Over time, this foothold in humanitarian organizations would serve, inter alia, as a foundation for information-gathering activity.

The story of Muhammad Halabi illustrates this claim. According to the allegations against him, Halabi was sent by Hamas in 2005 to work for the humanitarian aid organization World Vision, which operated in the Gaza Strip. The aim was for Halabi to integrate himself with the organization’s decision-makers while secretly exploiting this closeness to help Hamas. For many years, Halabi performed this mission, all the while climbing the rungs of the organization and rising to the rank of a senior employee. Halabi used his standing in the organization to help Hamas in a number of ways, such as furnishing economic aid and getting necessary equipment into the Gaza Strip. Halabi also provided Hamas with information to which he had access as a result of his work. In or around 2012, Halabi passed on a list of potential sites for Hamas activity in Israeli territory, such as locations that could be used as tunnel exits and information about security arrangements at the Erez checkpoint in the northern Gaza Strip. Moreover, Halabi recruited another individual from World Vision to the ranks of Hamas.[[114]](#footnote-114) Halabi carried out this assignment under the direction of Muhammad Dababash, who was then Hamas’s head of intelligence in the Gaza Strip, and with the knowledge of senior Hamas personnel, such as Muhammad Daif, and the commander of the northern brigade of Hamas’ military wing.[[115]](#footnote-115) Halabi further took advantage of his previous job in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to gather information, employing farmers in the areas close to the border with Israel to serve as forward observers.[[116]](#footnote-116)

Two further instances of recruitment during this period can be seen in the following. In 2011, Wassim Nasasrah and Ma'ruf Khatatbah, Hamas operatives from Bait Furik, sought to establish military cells on both sides of the Green Line. To that effect, Nasasrah used his previous acquaintance with Muhammad As'ad of Kafr Kana through Hamdan 'Awidat, a resident of Hebron, who befriended As'ad over the internet and recruited him to Hamas. Nasasrah and Khatatbah asked As'ad to help gather information, procure weapons, and recruit other Israeli Arabs to Hamas. As'ad told them that he was suffering from a medical handicap and suggested they operate 'Awidat instead.[[117]](#footnote-117) As'ad even informed 'Awidat that he had recommended him for operation, but it is unknown whether the suggestion to recruit 'Awidat came to fruition.

Beginning at least as early as 2017, 'Ubadah 'Alami, 39, from East Jerusalem, was in contact with two Turkey-based Hamas operatives (one of whom was Jihad Yaghmur, a Hamas operative who participated in the abduction of the murdered soldier Nahshon Waxman in 1994 and who was released as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange in 2011). Over the course of this correspondence, 'Alami was recruited to Hamas on two primary levels. The first was cash smuggling; 'Alami would eventually help the organization move more than $60,000 among various entities based on instructions received from Hamas personnel. The second was information gathering. 'Alami was told to use forward observation and photography to gather information about sites of strategic importance in Israel, including army bases and airfields. He was also instructed to gather information about Palestinians who sold land to Jewish entities and Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. 'Alami fulfilled the task assigned to him, gathering information about Israeli security sites (army bases and the nuclear reactor in Dimona) and civilian sites (hospitals and airfields). He continued this activity until his arrest by Israeli security forces in 2019.[[118]](#footnote-118)

Hamas also found several methods by which to use the WhatsApp platform for the purposes of HUMINT activity. The first was through impersonation and the creation of fictitious profiles. In July 2019, the IDF uncovered Hamas attempts to elicit information from soldiers. Hamas personnel contacted soldiers via WhatsApp, introduced themselves as comrades-in-arms, and asked their interlocutors questions about their routine activities. A soldier in Paratrooper Battalion 890 received a WhatsApp message from an unfamiliar number, which he recognized as Israeli because of the +972 country code; the writer of the message claimed to be a soldier. The WhatsApp message asked for the battalion’s training itinerary and dates of operational activity. To enhance his credibility, the operative sent a document, procured by Hamas, that included the unit’s training schedule. Hamas carried out similar activities against other soldiers in field units, such as Golani and Nahal.[[119]](#footnote-119)

The three published screenshots contain three fairly similar exchanges. Here, we see that the fictitious profile created by Hamas greets the soldier warmly and politely, then asks him where he serves and requests the battalion’s training itinerary. In some instances, the soldier wonders at the identity of his interlocutor; however, the conversation soon becomes friendly, and we can see that in at least a few cases the Hamas profile manages to convince the soldiers of its veracity.

Hamas also uses WhatsApp groups of Palestinians and Israeli Arabs run by the organization as platforms for its needs. These groups not only contain propaganda and materials about Hamas, but are also used to gather intelligence from human sources. One significant example took place following the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit (Sayeret Matkal)’s November 2018 operation in Khan Yunis. In a covert operation, dubbed “Spearhead” by Hamas, an elite undercover IDF unit was exposed by Hamas operatives. One of the combatants was killed in the ensuing firefight, while the others managed to escape back to Israel. Hamas’s security apparatuses carried out an in-depth investigation of the incident; over the course of the investigation, they tried to gather information about the details of the operation and its participants by means of HUMINT, as described below.

Hussain Huari, 20, who had lived for most of his life with his father in Nablus until moving to Jatt to live with his mother in 2018, took the advice of a friend, Karim Issa, and participated in Kutlah Islamiyah activity, which included Hamas propaganda. Since the incident in Khan Yunis, Huari had become very interested in Hamas activity, and read whatever he could find about the organization on the internet and in social media. In 2018, he joined four WhatsApp groups identified with Hamas (e.g., one was called Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din, the name of Hamas’s military wing) and corresponded with a group administrator. After the aforementioned IDF action exposed in Gaza, an individual named Abu 'Ubaidah (a Hamas operative living in Gaza, whose real name was As'ad), the administrator of one of the groups, addressed the group members with a request for information about the identity of the Sayeret Matkal combatants who had participated in the action. Huari, who thought he knew one of the combatants, contacted the group administrator and gave him the details he knew. According to Huari, the information was passed on to a Hamas body called the “Military Communications Administration.”[[120]](#footnote-120)

As in the Huari case, where a West Bank resident moved westward across the Green Line and was operated by Hamas, Hamas recruited Gaza Strip residents who were the descendants of mixed families (i.e., families in which one parent was an Israeli citizen) for their ability to obtain Israeli citizenship or passports and enter Israeli territory; this ability proved useful for information gathering. Rami al-'Amudi, a 30-year-old from the Gaza Strip, was the son of an Israeli Jewish woman and a Palestinian father. He had lived in Khan Yunis his entire life, without contact with his mother. Towards the end of 2017, he contacted her again; in a process that lasted several months, he eventually received an Israeli identification card, which he used to move to Tel Aviv-Jaffa in November 2019. Before entering Israel, al-'Amudi was contacted by a Hamas handler, who recruited him to the organization and instructed him how to stay in touch securely. To that end, al-'Amudi bought a cellphone in December 2019; on the request of his handlers, he downloaded the messaging app Telegram in order to stay in contact. He reached out to his handlers, but it seems that he did not manage to gather any information before his arrest.[[121]](#footnote-121)

Rajab Dikah, a Gaza Strip resident in his thirties, was the son of an Israeli mother who lived in Lod. In 2017, he tried to get an Israeli passport on the basis of his mother’s citizenship. He moved to Israel, and was allowed to visit the Gaza Strip on occasion, because his wife and five children still lived there. Dikah was recruited to Hamas by an operative named Mithqal Radi', 32, from Bait Lahiya, and instructed to buy a cell phone and SIM card to stay in touch with his handlers. From October 2019, if not before, Dikah carried out diverse intelligence missions at the behest of his Hamas handlers. He photographed and documented army bases and sites, such as the location of an Iron Dome battery in the Jaljuliya region, and transmitted photos and locations to Hamas personnel. Other sites about which he reported included the Dan Region Headquarters of the IDF Home Front Command in Yahud, the Beit Hashoter police dormitory in Tel Aviv, the Israel Police Unit 433 Headquarters in Lod, an IDF base near Ramallah, and a prison in the Hasharon Detention Complex. During the round of fighting in November 2019 known as Black Belt in Israel, which began after the assassination of a senior figure in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip by Israel, Dikah was asked to identify the locations where the rockets fired at Israel fell and report them to Hamas members. He did in fact report on rocket hits in Gush Dan, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and the Eshkol region. In addition, he was asked to scout other potential candidates for Hamas; he also passed on information about one of his employers, whom he suspected of belonging to the Shin Bet.[[122]](#footnote-122)

Hamas also used individuals with Israeli work permits for HUMINT purposes. In August 2019, a Hamas operative named Abu 'Abdallah visited the home of Mahmud Miqdad, a Rafah resident in his thirties. Abu 'Abdallah knew that Miqdad had an entrance permit to Israel because of his work and hoped to exploit this access for the benefit of Hamas. Miqdad agreed to the request and was recruited to work for Hamas. Three days later, the two met again. Abu 'Abdallah picked Miqdad up by car after telling him to leave his cellphone at home. At this meeting, Miqdad was given his first mission: on entering Israel, he was to photograph IDF trucks carrying tanks driving towards the Gaza Strip, document bus stops where soldiers were waiting to be picked up, and photograph sites that were home to Iron Dome batteries. He was instructed to do his information gathering covertly, with a hat on his head and far from any passersby. To document and transmit his findings, Miqdad was given a smartphone. He was told to buy a SIM card in Israel, send the photos he had taken using Telegram, then erase the photos from the device. Miqdad was also given another cellphone to communicate with his handlers.[[123]](#footnote-123)

In the coming months, until February 2020, Miqdad worked with his brother 'Ahmad (with whom he discussed his recruitment by Hamas) to collect information within Israel. He also received ad hoc missions from his handlers. On Abu 'Abdallah’s request, he approached the Israel Air Force’s Nevatim base and observed it to see if there was anything unusual about the helicopter traffic; he noticed nothing out of the ordinary, a result that he reported to Abu 'Abdallah. He also scoped out a specific destination near the Ashkelon beach, where he had been sent by Abu 'Abdallah via Google Maps, and told his handlers that he saw nothing of note. He was sent to a base containing satellite dishes near Ofakim to locate an Iron Dome battery, but once again reported that he had found nothing. Miqdad’s Israeli employers told him there was an Iron Dome battery near the Beer Sheva prison, and he drove there to confirm this information. He did in fact find the battery, and reported his findings to Abu 'Abdallah, complete with photographs. Miqdad also provided information about a military base in the Mitzpe Ramon region and an adjacent bus stop in response to a specific request by Abu 'Abdallah, who had sent him the exact location of the base. In June 2020, after a brief stay in the Gaza Strip, Miqdad returned to Israel for another round of intelligence gathering. In July 2020, Abu 'Abdallah sent Miqdad an exact location near Kibbutz Ruhama, asking Miqdad to check the site for an Iron Dome battery. Miqdad took his brother with him; the two drove to the location, but reported to Abu 'Abdallah that they saw nothing. Miqdad later worked to further the planning of a bombing attack inside Israeli territory before his arrest in August 2020.[[124]](#footnote-124)

**Hamas Activity in Doubling Sources**

The sections above discussed Hamas’s HUMINT efforts in recruiting individuals for intelligence purposes. Hamas also worked to double sources after their collaboration with Israel was exposed, as will be described below.

The First Intifada consisted not only of a Palestinian struggle against Israel; it was also a time of a war of all against all within Palestinian society, and one of the main justifications used for causing harm to other Palestinians was the accusation that they were collaborating with Israel. The label of “collaborator” took on many meanings, and was not used exclusively in an intelligence context. Many Palestinians suspected of being Israeli agents were consequently abducted, beaten, and murdered.[[125]](#footnote-125) Hamas attached profound significance to the issue of reliability: The organization’s 1988 covenant states that it welcomes every Muslim who meets certain criteria, one of which is “keeping the secrets” of the movement.[[126]](#footnote-126)

The al-Majid organization was founded in 1986, before the formal establishment of Hamas. Its function was, inter alia, identifying and eliminating those suspected of collaborating with Israel. During the First Intifada, based on a fatwa issued by Shaikh Yassin, the organization surveilled, abducted, and interrogated collaborators; once they confessed, they were executed, even if they had not in fact carried out the deeds of which they were accused.[[127]](#footnote-127) Towards the end of the First Intifada, Hamas embarked on a new method: doubling collaborators and exploiting them to attain the organization’s goals.

According to a member of the body known as Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the Israeli governing institution in charge of civilian matters in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, COGAT operated an intelligence source known as Molecule during the first years of the Intifada (1988–1989) and perhaps later. Molecule not only worked for COGAT, but was involved in the goings-on in the Gaza Strip and could transmit high-value information, the majority of which concerned Fatah and only a minority Hamas. After some time, it became clear that Hamas was aware that Molecule was operated by Israel and exploited this fact for its own ends. For example, Hamas members would provide Molecule reliable, high-quality intelligence about Fatah members with the aim that he would share this information with the Israelis – a gambit of which Molecule himself appears to have been unaware. Furthermore, in early 1989, Israel was considering arresting Shaikh Yassin. As part of the effort to gather information for such an eventuality, COGAT told Molecule to find out details about Shaikh Yassin’s medical condition and the support he required in order to function. In order to obtain this information, Molecule contacted Hamas personnel; based on his questions, it was clear to Hamas that Israel intended to arrest the Shaikh. Two days later, Shaikh Yassin issued an unprecedented statement, announcing that if Israel retreated to the 1967 lines, Hamas would be prepared for a time-limited ceasefire. This move stopped the procedures that would have led to his arrest.[[128]](#footnote-128) This apparently indicates that Hamas learned information about Israel’s intentions from Molecule, whom the organization identified as an Israeli agent. This may be the reason that Molecule remained unharmed despite his collaboration. This case may be considered an early attempt at the doubling of sources, which will be discussed below.

Another doubling operation took place in 1993. The Israeli authorities arrested Maher Abu Srur for Hamas membership and supporting the organization’s activities in the First Intifada. In December 1992, after his release from Israeli prison, he was recruited by the Shin Bet as a collaborator. His primary mission was to gather information about terrorists living in his refugee camp, al-'Aidah, near Bethlehem. During his time as a collaborator, he grew remorseful about spying on his own people and confessed his connection with Israel to other Hamas members. They decided to exploit this connection, telling Abu Srur that he would have to kill Haim Nahmani, his handler, “to atone for his sin.”[[129]](#footnote-129)

Abu Srur embarked on the operation, accompanied by two cousins. He made an appointment to meet Nahmani on January 3, 1993, at a Shin Bet safe house in Jerusalem’s Rehavia neighborhood. When Nahmani arrived, the three accomplices ambushed him with a knife and a hammer, stabbing and striking him until he died. The three took Nahmani’s bag, which according to Hamas’s version contained information later used to unmask other collaborators, and fled to Bethlehem. Subsequently, on several occasions, Abu Srur managed to evade the pursuit of Israeli security forces. On July 1, 1993, he and two other men participated in a failed attack on a bus in Jerusalem. Abu Srur was killed in an exchange of gunfire with Israeli soldiers.[[130]](#footnote-130)

About a year later, Hamas conducted a similar attack. On December 22, 1993, Hamas killed two Israelis as part of a series of revenge attacks in response to the assassination of a senior member of the organization's military wing, Imad 'Aql. In the ensuing investigation, Israel arrested members of terror organizations in the area. One of the detainees was 'Abd al-Mun'aim Abu Hamid, a student at Bir Zeit University’s Department of Literature. He was interrogated for three weeks by the Shin Bet; during the interrogation, he agreed to collaborate with and gather information for Israel. His handler was Noam Cohen, nicknamed Captain Majdi. Cohen had joined the Shin Bet in the early 1990s and was considered a brilliant young handler.[[131]](#footnote-131)

Abu Hamid’s consent to collaborate with Israel was a sham. Behind the backs of his Israeli bosses, Abu Hamid informed Hamas contacts of his connection with the Shin Bet; they in turn consulted with higher-ranking Hamas figures to determine how best to take advantage of the situation. A later Hamas testimony indicates that Yahiya 'Aiyyash, also known as “the engineer,” was one of the participants in this consultation, and that he dictated the ultimate course of action. 'Aiyyash decided to exploit Abu Hamid’s connection for assassinations rather than intelligence operations, such as transmitting misinformation or learning about the Shin Bet’s modus operandi. Nevertheless, Hamas claims that before Cohen’s assassination, Abu Hamid was able to obtain valuable information about Shin Bet methods and other Palestinian collaborators, in addition to plying Cohen with misinformation.[[132]](#footnote-132)

Cohen and Abu Hamid met a few times. In these meetings, Cohen provided Abu Hamid with a certain amount of money, which he used to buy the gun with which he would eventually kill Cohen. Once the operation had been planned in detail, Abu Hamid called Cohen and told him that he had valuable information to share. The two scheduled a meeting for February 13, 1994, at the old industrial zone near Bituniya. That afternoon, Cohen arrived with his two bodyguards in his private Mercedes. Abu Hamid was waiting behind a wall; when he saw the car, he signaled his two partners, and they opened fire on the vehicle. Cohen sustained serious injuries and was rushed to the hospital, where he died on the operating table. Three days later, Hamas released a film clip in which Abu Hamid reported the particulars of the operation.[[133]](#footnote-133)

Abu Hamid and his partners escaped the scene, pursued by Israeli security forces. Abu Hamid’s partners were tracked down on February 24. One was killed where he was hiding; the other was arrested and received four life sentences, but was released in the Shalit prisoner exchange in October 2011. Abu Hamid eluded capture for another three months, until he was discovered in a shelter in the village of al-Ram and killed in a shoot-out with Israeli security personnel.[[134]](#footnote-134)

Throughout the Second Intifada, which broke out in September 2000, and after Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and Hamas’s seizure of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the Palestinians continued to act against suspected collaborators with Israel. The security apparatus established by the Palestinian Authority in the mid-1990s arrested, interrogated, and tried these suspects, often severely torturing them.[[135]](#footnote-135) Despite this activity on the part of the PA, Hamas too continued to act against suspected collaborators, using methods relatively similar to those of the previous decade, i.e., intelligence gathering, interrogation, and murder of suspects.[[136]](#footnote-136) In the period from Hamas’s military institutionalization in the Gaza Strip, starting in 2004, until it assumed control of the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2007, Hamas demonstrated more advanced doubling activity, as is indicated by the following two cases.

On December 7, 2004, Hamas carried out an action called Penetrating Arrow (*al-Sahm al-Thaqib*) in honor of the anniversary of the First Intifada. In the months before the action, Hamas dug a tunnel east of Gaza City, placing a powerful explosive device containing 1.5 tons of explosives inside the tunnel. On the day of the action, an IDF force entered the Gaza Strip to search the area near the tunnel. After the force began its activity in the designated area, the device detonated, killing one Israeli soldier and wounding four.[[137]](#footnote-137)

After the operation, it became clear that the force had entered the Strip to perform the search based on concrete intelligence it had received on the presence of a tunnel or a senior Hamas operative in the area. The information given to the IDF was false; according to Hamas, the information was transmitted by a double agent to draw in the Israeli soldiers and trap them with the explosives in the tunnel. In this case, it is unclear whether this was an Israeli agent who’d been doubled by Hamas or a proactive Hamas operation to embed a double agent into the Shin Bet. In the version of events issued by Hamas afterwards, it is clear that Hamas claims to have embedded him as a double agent from the start.[[138]](#footnote-138)

The second incident was yet more sophisticated. In mid-2006, the Israeli intelligence service recruited a Gaza Strip resident (henceforth “the source”)[[139]](#footnote-139) to gather intelligence. After a month, during which the source passed information about Hamas activities to his Israeli handlers, the source contacted Nizmi Za'rub, a Hamas operative, and reported that he was working for the Israelis. Za'rub proposed that the source serve as a double agent. For the next four months, the source provided Hamas with a consistent report of his dealings with the Israeli side. He was instructed to direct his Israeli handlers to the home of a Hamas operative wanted by the Israeli security services; in tandem, Hamas operatives would set a trap for the Israeli soldiers, booby-trap the home of the operative, and set an ambush for the entering IDF force. To this end, the source provided his Israeli handler with the location of the Hamas operative’s home. However, when the Israeli force arrived, the operative was away, and the soldiers destroyed the house without further incident.[[140]](#footnote-140)

Later on, the source was operated by Muhammad Abu Harb of Hamas, who surveilled him and recorded his conversations with his Israeli handlers. The source gave his SIM card to Abu Harb, who put it in his own phone, allowing Abu Harb to guide the source in his replies to the Israelis. On several occasions, based on instructions from his Hamas handlers, the source fed false information to the Israelis with regard to locations that supposedly contained Hamas activity or operatives (primarily in Sufa and Khan Yunis) in order to lure IDF forces into planned ambushes or booby-trapped structures. The source even suggested that his Israeli handler recruit his two brothers, planning to convert them into additional double agents. His Israeli handler was interested, and did in fact contact them.[[141]](#footnote-141)

After the death of Abu Harb, Ra'id al-'Atar, the regional brigade commander and a senior Hamas operative, assumed the handling of the source himself. al-'Atar gave the source a new cellphone and instructed him to report his every interaction with the Israeli handler. al-'Atar planned for the source to pass on false information to his Israeli handlers about the presence of Hamas operatives in Sufa in order to attract an IDF force to the area, whereupon Hamas would abduct a soldier. Moreover, the source provided al-Atar with the names of Gaza residents he suspected of collaborating with Israel’s intelligence service.[[142]](#footnote-142) Eventually, however, he was arrested by the Israeli security services.

After Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip and became more institutionalized, including the operation of intelligence and security apparatuses such as the Military Intelligence Department (MID) and the governmental Internal Security Force (ISF), the organization’s familiar method of doubling sources took on a far more sophisticated nature. Between 2016 and 2018, Hamas conducted an operation against the Israeli intelligence services, including the doubling and running of an agent. The operation was conceived when a Hamas security operative identified an attempt by Israeli intelligence to recruit a Gaza Strip resident with the first initial N (henceforth “N”), whereupon N came into contact with Hamas figures. At the outset, N was frightened by the situation; the Hamas agents reassured him and explained the planned operation, which was aimed to mislead the Israelis and make use of N as a double agent. The operation was led by the ‘Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and appears to have been managed by the MID, based on the symbols that appear in *Illusions*, a Hamas film about the operation.[[143]](#footnote-143)

Hamas started to record the conversations between Israeli intelligence and N, instructing N how to reply and behave in his contact with his handlers. The recorded conversations show, for example, Kamil, N’s Israeli handler, asking him about the findings of a certain inquiry he was told to conduct. Kamil also wants to know whether N was required to undergo a security screening at the checkpoint. At the end of the conversation, Kamil reassures N and tells him to continue behaving as normal. From these conversations, it was clear to Hamas that Israel planned to use the agent to damage the organization’s rocket systems by identifying the locations from which Hamas launched rockets toward Israel and where the rockets were stored. This would enable Israel to attack the launch locations during an escalation or sabotage them ahead of time.[[144]](#footnote-144)

Given this discovery, Hamas decided to carry out an act of subterfuge against Israel using N as a double agent. Thus, the organization would be able to learn the topics of interest to Israeli intelligence, as well as its means and methods of operation; surprise it by thwarting its actions; and disrupt its confidence in its ability to gather intelligence from within Hamas. To this end, for instance, Hamas recorded a conversation between N and his Israeli handler in which the latter teaches N to use a camera to gather intelligence. Hamas realized that the source had been sent not only to identify the organization’s launch locations but also to photograph the actual rockets, so that Israel could study the models held by Hamas and their range, as well as the number of rockets in Hamas’s possession. All the answers N brought back to his Israeli handler were deceptive, having been composed by Hamas’s intelligence personnel.[[145]](#footnote-145)

After some time, N was directed to a dead drop, where he was told to pick up equipment and work tools that had been concealed there for him. In additional conversations, Hamas learned the location of the equipment; they also heard the instructions given to N to take certain precautions in arriving at the site, such as confirming that there was no traffic and that no one was looking at him as he made the pickup. Once he had collected the equipment, N was asked to use it to damage the rockets and render them inoperable. The handler explained to him how to use the drill. N did as he was told, but the rockets he damaged were rockets Hamas had set aside for this purpose at certain preselected locations. As he carried out the orders, Hamas operatives closely tracked his actions, and thus were able to ascertain how, as they understood it, Israeli UAVs had been deployed in Gaza’s skies to monitor the operation. Hamas was also able to gain significant insight into the kinds of tools utilized by Israel, as well as the method it used to guide agents. The organization received instructional videos sent to N by his handlers with precise directions on the use of his tools, as well as various materials related to the sabotage he had been asked to perform on the Hamas rockets.[[146]](#footnote-146)

Hamas presented clear evidence that its deception had been successful and that N’s Israeli handlers believed him to be their agent. In one conversation between Kamil and N, Kamil expressed his considerable appreciation for the work N was doing for Israel. Kamil also passed on to N the praise heaped upon him by the head of the Gaza Strip region and by a number of the most senior figures in Israel. At a certain point, however, after N had supposedly been an agent for Israel for about two years, the Israeli side realized that something had gone wrong in N’s operation. In N’s final conversation with the Israelis, his new Israeli handler, Munir, reproached N for his conduct. In response, N, scornfully, informed the Israeli intelligence officer that the Israeli operation had failed and that the al-Qassam Brigades had known what was going on the entire time. To enhance the psychological effect, Hamas made a point to show photos of rocket launches from the Gaza Strip in *Illusions*, giving viewers the impression that these were the very same rockets that N had been asked to sabotage. The film suggested that as a result of the organization’s successful doubling operation, these rockets had remained in good working order and had been fired at Israel.[[147]](#footnote-147)

This survey of Hamas’s doubling operations demonstrate that the doubling efforts developed with each passing incident. This is evident on four key levels: the handler, the objective, the time frame, and the publication of success. The first doubling operations were limited and handled by local Hamas cells; gradually, more senior echelons became involved, and the final doubling operation was directed by Hamas’s intelligence and security apparatus in an organized fashion. The objective, too, evolved: while early attempts were aimed at localized actions against Shin Bet handlers, the efforts of the 2000s were planned as bait to draw IDF forces into ambushes, and the most recent case consisted of an ongoing deception aimed at hindering one of Israel’s most important efforts, namely the destruction of Hamas’s rockets. Furthermore, the operations grew longer: from a few days to weeks or months to approximately two years in the final instance. Finally, there was development in the way the cases were publicized and manipulated to create a psychological impact. While the early operations were made public through posters and press releases, Hamas’s Information Office later released recorded statements and documentation of the preparations. In the final case, Hamas produced a well-planned, polished, lengthy movie clip, meant to enhance the psychological victory, which was broadcast on an international network after a preliminary publicity campaign. This development is illustrated by the table below.[[148]](#footnote-148)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Period | Hamas’s Organizational Phase | Doubling Operation Characteristics | | | |
|  |  | **Handler** | **Objective** | **Time Frame** | **Publication** |
| **1990s** | Individual cells | Local members and commanders | Assassinating local handlers | Days-weeks | Posters and declarations |
| **2000s** | Semi-organized | Military commanders | Ambushing IDF forces | Months-years | Press release by the Information Office |
| **2010s** | Organized | Intelligence and counterintelligence apparatus | Ongoing deception, damaging Israel’s core efforts | Years | High-quality films, widely distributed |

2.1 A table illustrates the development of Hamas's activity for doubling sources.

**Conclusion**

The time-honored method of using human sources to gather intelligence about the enemy, which, like the collection of GEOINT, does not require advanced technological capacities to carry out at a basic level, has served Hamas since its inception. In particular, it has helped the organization to obtain information that cannot be gathered passively, and that is only accessible by entering the Israeli street or even penetrating the ranks of Israel’s security establishment.

Hamas’s HUMINT operations have reflected considerable progress and development throughout the organization’s years of existence. At first, recruits were ordinary citizens with access to the zone of conflict, and they carried out mostly reconnaissance missions. Initially, the parties gathering information on sites in Israel were mostly Arab Israeli citizens; however, with the passage of time, deceptive tactics allowed the organization to handle soldiers serving in the IDF without their knowledge, which allowed Hamas greater access to significant classified information. Similarly, the demands the organization made of its agents also changed in nature. In the early days of the organization, Hamas recruits were primarily asked to carry out tactical missions, such as the identification of potential sites for terror attacks. With time, however, the demands expanded, including the identification of targets suitable for rocket attacks and information about IDF troop movements. One can clearly see that the absolute majority of the recruits were Israeli citizens who were members of minority groups; Hamas found these individuals easier to recruit and run, both because of ideological identification in a substantial number of cases and because the organization had convenient access to them, including the ability to utilize the common language of Arabic.

At first, contact was established by means of unmediated communication between West Bank and Gaza Strip residents and holders of Israeli ID cards located nearby, such as the residents of East Jerusalem. Later, some contact was initiated at junctures where it was possible to approach traveling Israeli citizens, such as in Makkah during the *hajj*. Cyberspace, the internet, and the use of social media have allowed Hamas to make contact from afar and have significantly expanded its ability to recruit and handle operatives. Social media and email have been exploited to establish simple, inexpensive communications, the goal being, to the extent possible, to reserve communication for secure platforms and to maintain maximal secrecy.

Hamas has demonstrated noteworthy creativity in many instances of its HUMINT activity. A central example is the doubling of agents, a technique that has allowed Hamas to gain quality access to Israeli security elements, while skipping the arduous process of identifying, recruiting, and handling reliable agents. Agents were doubled not only to gain high-value information, but to provide disinformation to or even conduct attacks on the Israeli security establishment. A similar creativity is evident in the organization’s use of fictitious social media accounts, part of an increasingly sophisticated attempt at social engineering to obtain information from serving IDF members.

This creativity can also be seen in the fact that, in order to operate HUMINT, Hamas has never hesitated to exploit the vulnerabilities ensuing from citizen activity and from civil rights granted to the Palestinians. Thus, Hamas has recruited members of an NGO that operated in the Gaza Strip, and has made use of civilians traveling from Gaza to Israel on permits given them as the result of family connections.

In conclusion, even though many of Hamas’s recruits were discovered at some point or other during their operation, it is apparent that in some cases they facilitated the organization’s access to intelligence that improved its understanding of Israel, particularly with regard to targets on Israeli soil. Still, as far as we know, Hamas never succeeded in recruiting anyone from Israel’s inner circle and gathering information from Israel’s secret core, a sign of the organization’s inferior status as a VNSA facing Israel’s powerful counterintelligence apparatuses.

**Chapter 3: Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT)**

**Hamas’s OSINT Until the Institutionalization of Its Military Wing in Gaza in the Mid-2000s**[[149]](#footnote-149)

During the 1990s, the Quds Press news agency served as a kind of information database for Hamas. In practice, its branches functioned as centers for gathering OSINT; data was transferred by phone or fax to the agency’s London headquarters, then sent to the United States or Jordan as needed. In March 1993, a search of the Quds Press office in Hebron conducted by the Shin Bet and the Civil Administration uncovered considerable archival material, including features from Israeli newspapers, detailed summaries of incidents on the ground, and reports on events in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Israeli NGO B'Tselem.[[150]](#footnote-150)

Hamas operatives abroad also collected open-source information. The Islamic Center for Research and Studies, which was first located in Illinois and later moved its base of operations to Virginia, served as Hamas’s cover in the United States throughout the 1990s. Its mission was to gather information and compose public diplomacy communications that would serve as a basis for policy decisions by the American leadership. To that end, it engaged in the systematic collection of OSINT. Translation agencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would translate Israeli news sources; a daily collection of materials would be sent from East Jerusalem to the United States in the early afternoon, so that it would arrive at its destination as early as possible. The Islamic Center also collated information from the Arab and international press. The Islamic University in Gaza gathered information about the Palestinian territories and transmitted some of it to the Islamic Center, and the Quds Press news agency served as an additional source of information.[[151]](#footnote-151)

Hamas cells maintained an ongoing collection of OSINT, primarily for policy purposes and to gain a general understanding of the situation in Israel. In addition, they made use of the press to advance their activities through study and analysis of the Israeli discourse. In November 1992, after the initial attempt by Yahiya 'Aiyyash’s cell to carry out an attack in Tel Aviv using a car bomb, a friend of one cell member turned to the press to reveal the outcome and consequences of the incident. He discovered that, while the car had been apprehended and the attempt itself had failed, the Israeli public saw this kind of attack as extremely dangerous; in fact, the Israel Police called it “the most dangerous since the establishment of the state.”[[152]](#footnote-152)

In a book by Hamas operative Jamil Wadi, published posthumously in 1993, Wadi writes that his research for the book partially relied on reports from open Israeli news sources, both television and radio broadcasts, in order to ascertain how terror operations were perceived in Israel and learn the steps Israel was taking to counter them. For example, he cites the impact of these attacks on Israeli civilians and the difficulties they posed for security forces, both of which he came to understand through excerpts from the popular Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*. Likewise, after the attempted abduction of the soldier Alon Karavani in the Gaza Strip in September 1992, the members of the abducting cell learned from the Israeli media that the incident had led to the formulation of new IDF policies – such as a requirement to travel in pairs – for driving on roads in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and later even within the Green Line.[[153]](#footnote-153)

After the January 1993 attack on the Israeli settlement of Ganei Tal in the Gaza Strip, Hamas gathered considerable information from the Israeli media in order to examine Israeli responses to the incident. Thus, for example, Hamas translated a column by military correspondent Alex Fishman in *Hadashot* that described certain characteristics of the attack as novel: A Palestinian terror organization had succeeded in penetrating an Israeli settlement, circumventing the settlement’s security arrangements through preliminary planning. The translation included Fishman’s opinion that the attack proved that the expulsion of Hamas operatives to Marj al-Zahour in December 1992 had not significantly affected the organization’s military capabilities, as well as a similar opinion by a *Jerusalem Post* columnist. Additional information was collected and translated from *Al Hamishmar*. In that publication, members of the inner circle of Israel’s political leadership expressed the opinion that while there had been a drop in al-Qassam Brigades activity since the expulsion, the attack made clear the need for further and farther-reaching steps against the organization. Interestingly, it was important for Hamas to hear about the link drawn in Israel between the attack and the Israeli Supreme Court’s retroactive decision to approve the expulsion, because this had been one of the reasons for choosing the date of the attack.[[154]](#footnote-154)

Hamas’s intelligence-gathering activity continued during the Second Intifada. In May and June of 2002, the Silwan cell carried out several terror attacks against high-quality targets in Israeli territory. In May, an improvised explosive device (IED) was placed in a fuel tanker and driven to Pi-Glilot, a gas depot in central Israel. The device was then detonated. About a month later, members of the same cell placed an IED on the railroad tracks near Lod; after another month, they left an IED on the railroad tracks near Rehovot. In the wake of the Pi-Glilot attack, the cell’s members followed Israeli media reports. They discovered, to their surprise, that the attack they had planned had the potential to do far worse than the detonation of the tanker alone. It could have caused the explosion of a fuel installation in Pi-Glilot, leading to much greater damage – destroying entire neighborhoods and killing and maiming thousands of people. The cell also kept abreast of news regarding Israeli responses to the attack: reorganization, increased security, and the drilling of security protocols in the presence of Prime Minister Sharon. Still, the members of the cell did not act a second time; they had lost contact with their senior supervisor, Ibrahim Hamad, and could not make a strategic decision of this kind on their own. It is worth quoting the recommendation made by the cell’s leader, Muhammad 'Arman, to Hamas after the incident:

It is the duty of anyone involved in the resistance to the occupation to follow the enemy’s media and know how it thinks in order to draw up appropriate plans. Moreover, following the media provides jihad fighters with free information they have never previously considered. Therefore, it is the duty of those planning acts of resistance to master the Hebrew language and follow all Israeli news items and analyses. This is an extremely significant point. It absolutely cannot be ignored.[[155]](#footnote-155)

As mentioned above, the members of the cell also initiated an attack involving the bombing of railroad tracks near Lod and Rehovot. After a first attempt on June 21, 2002, which resulted in five wounded, they kept abreast of publicly available Israeli media broadcasts. From an interview with a police officer, they learned that the reason for the relatively minor damage was the use of a 5-kg bomb; according to the officer, had the charge been three times larger – 15 kg – the damage would have been significantly greater. As a result of this discovery, cell operatives resolved to increase the size of the explosive device in the next operation targeting railroad tracks. However, because of the difficulty of obtaining explosives, the plan was never executed. From this episode, it is apparent that OSINT proved helpful to Hamas even before its institutionalization as a means of acquiring quality information for tactical operations.[[156]](#footnote-156)

Another aspect of OSINT gathering from Israel’s open media is evident in Hamas’s 2004 publications, issued by the Information Office of the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. For example, a collection of responses by prominent Israeli figures to Operation Days of Penitence (an IDF operation in the Gaza Strip that took place in September and October of 2004), as well as to certain Hamas actions, demonstrates fairly systematic gathering of OSINT from a variety of Israeli media sources even at this early stage. A piece on the Israeli operation in *Maariv* explicitly articulated the Israeli fear of conducting urban warfare in densely populated areas of the Jabaliya refugee camp and the consequent loss of life. In the military newspaper *Bamahaneh*, an IDF officer was quoted as attributing persistence to Hamas in the face of the Israeli operation. The Brigades’ publications also included a translation of a critical op-ed in *Haaretz*; according to the author, these “futile” operations had failed to end the rocket fire while leading to the killing of innocent Palestinians, as well as international condemnation of Israel. In addition, the publications included information from *Yedioth Ahronoth* suggesting that IDF officers had sought a unilateral retreat and an end to the operation before international pressure became a factor.[[157]](#footnote-157)

With regard to another Hamas operation in the same period, in which the organization detonated a tunnel underneath an Israeli military post in Rafah on December 13, 2004, the publications cited Amos Harel’s analysis in *Haaretz*. Harel described the difficulty faced by the IDF in confronting a threat such as a booby-trapped tunnel; he attributed particular importance to the attack because it positioned Hamas as the entity that had ousted Israel from the Gaza Strip by force (the attack took place eight months before the disengagement from Gaza, scheduled for the summer of 2005). Finally, the publications reported criticism voiced by members of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Security Committee on the situation in the Gaza Strip – specifically, that Hamas’s growing military strength and successful operations posed challenges to which the IDF had no sufficient response (e.g., the firing of mortar bombs that the IDF could not intercept).[[158]](#footnote-158)

In early 2005, the Information Office continued to gather OSINT, as evidenced by the Arabic translation of a column in *Haaretz* about Israeli fears of imminent civil war in light of the evacuation of the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and certain internal Israeli positions on the fast-approaching disengagement.[[159]](#footnote-159) Hamas continued to devote considerable attention to Israel’s internal condition on the eve of the disengagement, relying on the Israeli media for information. In its weekly roundup on Israel, Hamas reported on an Israeli settler who had committed suicide because his unit had been ordered to participate in the planned evacuation of Gush Katif, on the surreptitious evacuation of the Elei Sinai settlement as the result of a fire, and on a visit to Sderot by Prime Minister Sharon and Defense Minister Mofaz to raise the residents’ morale and stop them from leaving the city.[[160]](#footnote-160)

**Use of Open-Source Material after the Institutionalization of the Hamas Military Wing**

After Hamas assumed control of the Gaza Strip, the organization’s gathering of OSINT was further institutionalized and organized. Senior operatives and their staff, many of whom had learned Hebrew through contact with Israelis or time served in Israeli prisons, continued to collect information from the Israeli media independently. According to a close associate of Ahmad al-Ja'bari, who served as the head of Hamas’s military wing until his assassination by Israel, al-Ja'bari closely followed the Israeli media and understood without the aid of translation.[[161]](#footnote-161) However, the lion’s share of intelligence gathering of this kind became the responsibility of the relevant apparatus within the organization.

Since approximately 2007, the Military Intelligence Department (MID) of the 'Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades has published a weekly report entitled “Israeli Affairs” (*Shu’un Isra’iliyyah*). In explaining its purpose, the report states that it “tracks news and analyses in the Zionist sector, and comprehensively collates news items of a security […] and political nature.” The objective of the report is to instill Hamas operatives with “an understanding and expertise in developments and events to form a background and foundation as a basis for action.”[[162]](#footnote-162) It is worth noting that, on the back cover of the report, a comment marked “Important” stipulates that the material must be destroyed after use – an indication of its intelligence- and security-related content.

To understand the characteristics of Hamas’s OSINT gathering, this chapter will present the contents of a sample issue – No. 136, dated February 18, 2010 – based on the articles that appeared in the Israeli media in the previous week. The front cover shows captions of events; one is formatted as the headline, while the rest are subheadings. Page 1 expands on the headline, featuring details shared by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert about the behind-the-scenes decision-making during Operation Cast Lead. The content is based, inter alia, on an article in *Maariv*. The page notes the great significance attributed by Israeli senior leaders to the number of civilian victims on the Palestinian side when they sat down to decide on the scope and depth of the operation.[[163]](#footnote-163)

After this, the report is divided into four sections: security (*Shu’un Amniyya*), military (*Shu’un ‘askariyya*), related news (*Akhbar al-Muta’alaqa*, i.e., news related to Hamas and its topics of interest in Israel), and finally news on Israel’s internal situation and politics. The report concludes with an overall situation assessment given the week’s news, analysis, and conclusions.

The first section, devoted to “Security Affairs,” begins with a disclosure by Israel (approved by the military censor) that security forces had thwarted a Hamas attempt to abduct a soldier two months earlier; the reporting is based on an article in *Yedioth Ahronoth.* The subsequent article, based on a piece in *Haaretz*, deals with travel warnings issued to Israelis by the Prime Minister’s Office and describes the risks associated with travel to certain countries on the anniversary of the death of the senior Hizballah figure Imad Mughniyeh*.* Next is a detailed article, based on an article in *Makor Rishon*, about a delay in the construction of the fence between Israel and Egypt resulting from budgetary shortfall and Israeli political infighting*.* Another article, based on information from Galei Tzahal, the Israeli military radio station, cites statements by senior Israeli sources to the effect that Hamas is still highly motivated to abduct soldiers for the sake of negotiations. The section goes on to analyze the Chief Military Prosecutor’s Unit in the IDF’s Military Advocate General. Based on a report by the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, it covers the unit’s structure and the role played by its various branches in advising the IDF and the security establishment on legal issues related to army activity and personnel.[[164]](#footnote-164)

The next article provides coverage of new details exposed by the chief of the Dubai Police regarding the assassination of Hamas senior operative Mahmud al-Mabhouh in October 2010, including the number of assassins and their methods*.* The penultimate article of the first section concerns Defense Minister Ehud Barak’s opinion that Israel cannot free abducted soldier Gilad Shalit by military means, as well as Barak’s opinions on other issues, such as the peace process*.* The final article in the section addresses a meeting between Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and his American counterpart in Tel Aviv, primarily devoted to the Iranian nuclear threat*.* All three of these articles are based on reporting in *Yedioth Ahronoth*.[[165]](#footnote-165)

The second section, on “Military Affairs,” begins with an article on the installation of FLY, a satellite control and communications system in military vehicles such as armored troop carriers and Jeeps, following an announcement by the head of the IDF’s Computer Service Directorate quoted in *Maariv*. The second article, based on an article in *Israel Hayom*, discusses the IDF’s forecast that the rate of young Israelis to opt out of army service will be reduced to less than 9.9 percent by 2012, and presents data on draft avoidance in the past. The next article deals with reservists’ demands for benefits similar to those received by soldiers in active service, drawing from *Yedioth Ahronoth*. Another article addresses the construction of the defense system Iron Fist, as well as the IDF’s “Tiger” armed troop vehicles and the unit to be equipped with this type of vehicle, based on an article in *Bamahaneh*. The following piece reports on the graduation ceremony for IDF ground forces officers, where the largest number of Engineering Corps officers in history was confirmed, according to *Maariv*. Afterwards, the publication presents an article from *Yedioth Ahronoth* on a yeshiva high school in Kiryat Gat; the article notes the fact that 100 percent of the yeshiva’s graduates serve in the army, with 72 percent in combat roles, and quotes the principal’s declarations on the importance of army service. The final article in the section deals with a confrontation between Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi about new appointments in the IDF, based on *Yedioth Ahronoth.*[[166]](#footnote-166)

In the third section, on “Related News,” there is a detailed feature, based on an article in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on activists for the release of Gilad Shalit. The second article deals with the exposure of a cell within the Palestinian Authority apparatus that had plotted the assassination of senior PA and Fatah officials, again based on an article in *Yedioth Ahronoth*. Afterwards, an article describes the weakness of Israeli public diplomacy in various institutions worldwide and on university campuses in the United States and Europe, as well as the allocation of government funds to this end, with information sourced from Galei Tzahal. The last article in the section, based on an article in *Maariv*, covers a public opinion survey by the Maagar Mohot Institute according to which 50 percent of national-religious Israelis were in favor of soldiers refusing and even protesting army orders.[[167]](#footnote-167)

The fourth section is comprised of briefer newsflashes. The first part of the section, “The Political Aspect,” references an article from *Israel Hayom* on an offer by Likud officials to Shaul Mofaz of Kadima, among other members of Knesset (MKs), to split from his party and join the coalition; the article also entertains the hypothesis that the chair of the Yisrael Beitenu party will leave the coalition. Afterwards, there is a summary of a meeting between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, where the two consider the possibility that the Russians will carry a letter on the Shalit deal from Israel to Hamas and discuss Russian sales of S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to Iran. The summary also quotes Netanyahu as saying that Israel is not planning to go to war with Iran or any other nation in the region. The section goes on to cite an item from Channel 2 about the Israeli offer submitted by the German mediator to Hamas for Shalit’s release. This is followed by a piece quoting Israeli U.N. Ambassador Gabriella Shalev on her hope that the U.N. Security Council would impose sanctions on Iran.[[168]](#footnote-168)

The second part of the section, “The Socioeconomic Aspect,” opens with coverage of the Israeli court decision to permit the establishment of a Jewish-only neighborhood in the 'Ajami area of Jaffa, where many of the residents are Arab, based on an article in *Yedioth Ahronoth*. The second newsflash concerns the suspicion that Rabbi Mordechai Elon, a prominent leader in the religious Zionist community, had sexually abused his students, as well as the steps taken by Forum Takana, an association of rabbis and lay leaders, to address the issue. The third presents data from the National Insurance Institute of Israel showing that 780,000 Israeli children live below the poverty line. The fourth, based on a report in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, deals with the discovery of 11 explosive devices in an apartment in the city of Ramle and the police response to the incident, including the police’s methods of locating the suspects. The section goes on to cover a bill adopted by the Knesset requiring all official Israeli institutions to install a water-saving device on their faucets. The final item recounts Deputy Health Minister Litzman’s accusations that the Finance Ministry had torpedoed plans to build a new hospital in Ashdod.[[169]](#footnote-169)

The end of the report consists of a general analysis of that week’s state of affairs. According to the analysis, Israeli leadership and reportage are all concerned with one major issue – Iran, and especially the need to hinder its plans for the development of nuclear and other advanced weapons. Netanyahu’s visit to Russia shared this aim: It was an attempt to enlist the Russians into the conflict, encouraging Russia to agree to sanctions on Iran until Iran puts an end to its nuclear program, which, according to Israel, is military in nature. This, too, was the purpose of Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman’s visit to Azerbaijan. The report also presents the complexity of the issue in light of the simultaneous negotiations between Iran and the world powers. Israel’s assertions and threats with regard to Hamas and Hizballah are also linked to this central aim, because, according to the writers of the Hamas intelligence report, Israel views both groups as Iranian protégés. To demonstrate, the report cites a speech delivered at the Herzliya Conference by Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe Yaalon on the need for Israel to prepare for an Iranian attack in response to Iran’s ongoing nuclear efforts.[[170]](#footnote-170)

The report shows extensive, systematic collection of OSINT by Hamas’s MID. It involves many fields, covering all aspects relevant to Israel: the army and security, politics, internal security, foreign relations, and society. Furthermore, it includes information culled from diverse media: print media, TV, and radio. This is mostly gleaned through the internet, including less prominent platforms such as newspapers identified with the Israeli right. It is also obvious that the report touches on elements that enhance Hamas’s understanding of current events in Israel, such as the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal or Israel’s delay in erecting the fence on the Israeli-Egyptian border, as well as more profound social issues, such as the percentage of Israelis that serve in the army or the number of soldiers liable to refuse orders. This enhanced understanding goes on to serve as a foundation for decision-making and operational activities. We see that the data is not only gathered but also analyzed into a full, integrated picture, wherein Hamas examines Israel and identifies key trends.

A further example of the organized collection of OSINT is an internal video report, produced by the MID, called “In the Margins of Events.” While the report has existed at least since 2007, it is impossible to determine whether it ran on a daily or weekly basis. This report covers selected items from the Israeli media, along with a translation into Arabic, on topics of interest to Hamas; each item is preceded by a brief explanation. Take, for example, the April 7, 2008 edition, which is 17 minutes long. The report begins with information that, according to the MID, indicates that the IDF expects significant warfare in the subterranean sphere in the next campaign in Gaza and is training to confront warfare in this sphere. The broadcast goes on to cite a feature on the topic from Channel 10 that documents the IDF’s training process. The next article addresses Hizballah’s development of anti-aircraft capabilities. Here, too, the reportage is from Channel 10, which shows IDF soldiers undergoing drills in the use of the weapon. The next item highlights Khalid Mash'al’s interview with the British Sky network, as covered by Israel’s Channel 2. The coverage emphasizes Mash'al’s statement that Gilad Shalit is still alive, alongside his reference to Hamas’s rocket fire at Israeli preschools, according to which Hamas does not aim at preschools; rather, this is the result of a statistical deviation due to the fact that Hamas possesses only primitive weapons. On the contrary – the Israeli media quotes Mash'al as saying – the Americans and the West are invited to equip the organization with more precise and advanced weapons. The last article deals with the Knesset’s decision to provide benefits to reserve soldiers serving in the IDF, and presents a Channel 10 report on the topic.[[171]](#footnote-171)

Another Hamas broadcast from 2007 or 2008 shows how the organization uses OSINT to further its operatives’ familiarity with the Israeli side. On July 21, 2007, the IDF identified suspicious movement along the border fence with the Gaza Strip. A Golani Brigade force entered to scan the zone and encountered a terrorist cell. In the ensuing fight, a hand grenade was thrown at a Golani company commander; to protect himself, he grabbed the terrorist closest to him and used him to shield himself from the shrapnel. The company commander was awarded a citation for this act. The Israeli media broadcast visual documentation of the battle, captured by an Israeli drone. Hamas presented the video clip documenting the fight alongside the Arabic translation of the Channel 10 reporter’s explanation, and used it to raise operatives’ awareness about Israel’s ability to gather visual intelligence, writing to them as follows:

This film contains thermal aerial photography of a battle between a forward ambush of jihadist fighters and 12 Golani Brigade soldiers on July 21, 2007, at 11 PM, in the northern Gaza Strip. We present it to our jihadist brothers to show them the danger inherent in thermal photography so that they will draw the right conclusions and lessons.[[172]](#footnote-172)

To analyze Israel’s stance and modus operandi in the negotiations to bring Shalit home, Hamas used experts to track the declarations made by senior Israeli military and political leaders on the topic. A senior Hamas OSINT expert known as Abu Anas presented his analysis to his superiors after Benjamin Netanyahu’s victory in the 2009 election. According to Abu Anas, Israel was “dragging its feet” in the negotiations and had hit a dead end; however, Netanyahu was interested in a political rather than a military solution. This and other analyses served as the foundation for Hamas policy decisions with regard to its negotiations with Israel.[[173]](#footnote-173) Indeed, from its inauguration on March 31, 2009, the Netanyahu government did not carry out any large-scale action against Hamas until after the release of Gilad Shalit in October 2011, even though escalating incidents of the kind that had led the Israeli government to embark on Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012 occurred before Shalit’s release. Thus, it is possible to claim that Hamas’s analysis and assessment of Israel’s policy were correct in this case.

Another internal OSINT publication, “al-Mash'ad al-Isra'ili,” (“The Israeli Viewer”) issued by the MID in November 2011, spans 29 minutes. The following provides a detailed overview of several installments of this report, based on features and reports from the Israeli media later translated by Hamas, that reflect the organization’s use of OSINT. In Vol. 184 (November 11), with a runtime of 29 minutes, the first item in the first section, based on Israeli TV broadcasts, addresses the institutionalization of relations between Israel and South Sudan, and includes coverage of Israel’s wish to use South Sudan’s airports as well as Netanyahu’s strategic decision to improve Israel’s relations with the nations around the Horn of Africa. The second item consists of an Arabic transcription of an item from Israel’s Channel 10 on an increase in the number of youths postponing their IDF service, which – according to the assessment at that time – would reach 60 percent by 2020. This posed a problem for the army, because many of those postponing their service were religious, and many were from the West Bank, groups representing a significant percentage of those who opted for combat service. The third item covers the rising incidence of violence among Israeli Arabs and the internal security services’ inability to deal with the phenomenon, again based on an item from Israel’s Channel 10. The fourth item presents a report on poverty in Israeli society, according to which 23 percent of residents live under the poverty line. The next item describes Israeli media coverage of the IAEA decision not to impose sanctions on Iran in response to its continued nuclear activities. The program also covered differences of opinion among the professional and political classes in Israel vis-à-vis the appropriate policy on Iran’s nuclear program.[[174]](#footnote-174)

The second section of the broadcast, based on Israel’s print journalism, cites an article from *Israel Hayom* on Israeli concerns about the growing strength of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Another item explores the tense relations between then-Foreign Minister Lieberman and Mossad Director Tamir Pardo, as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu’s efforts to mediate between them. The third piece deals with the doctors’ strike in Israel; it lays out the government’s attempts to resolve the crisis, alongside the Prime Minister’s threat to the strikers that extending the strike would only harm the doctors, because the country might, for example, decide to bring in physicians from India. Another item touches on the American decision to supply armor-piercing missiles to the Gulf nations, and the final item reports a steep increase in electricity rates in Israel due to problems with the natural gas supply from Egypt. The end of the program shows cartoons from the Israeli media: one on Israel’s concerns about a continuation of the Arab Spring, another expressing Israel’s worries about Iran’s development of long-range missiles, and two cartoons mocking the Prime Minister’s attempts to find replacements for the striking Israeli doctors.[[175]](#footnote-175)

In a broadcast from December 2012, in the section on Israeli television, the report first presents a story from Channel 2 News about Hamas supporters taking to the streets en masse in the West Bank, an incident that raised Israeli fears of a third intifada. The segment interviews subjects who express support for Hamas’s activities against Israel in the Gaza Strip, and presents analysis of the situation from a Channel 11 program on the topic. Later, the show extensively covers footage of a soldier fleeing from youths who pelted him with rocks in Kafr Qaddum in the West Bank, discussing the considerable criticism directed at the IDF’s standard response to rock throwers, as well as the damage caused by the video of the fleeing soldier to the image of the army and the state. The third segment deals with a Home Front Command drill in Holon, just south of Tel Aviv, in which a large building was detonated to test rubble removal and the evacuation of victims in case a missile hit or an earthquake leads to a structure’s collapse.[[176]](#footnote-176)

In the section providing an overview of the Israeli print media, the first segment deals with the request by the attorneys of Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, then embroiled in legal proceedings, to advance a deal that would allow him to return to his position quickly. Another segment breaks down the findings of a *Haaretz* public opinion poll on a range of economic and social issues affecting Israeli society. The poll showed that 37 percent of Israelis would consider emigrating if given the possibility. The third segment concerns the Finance Ministry’s decision to put a lien on the Palestinian Authority’s tax money because of the debt owed by the Palestinian Authority to the Israel Electric Corporation. The final segment, based on a report in the American media, covers Israel’s assessment of the missile deal between Egypt and South Korea in light of the Muslim Brotherhood regime’s hostility to Israel. The cartoons shown from the Israeli media address Israel’s ongoing healthcare crisis, the political state of affairs, and MK Shelly Yachimovich’s track record in the Labor Party, as well as the inability of advanced Israeli military systems, such as the Iron Dome, to combat rock throwing in the West Bank.[[177]](#footnote-177)

Beginning in 2013, it seems that responsibility for the production of the broadcast was transferred from the MID to the Information Office of the Hamas military wing. However, beyond changes in the graphic design of the broadcast, the content clearly remained the same. In fact, it is likely that the collection of intelligence was still conducted by the MID; only the production of the broadcast itself was transferred to the Information Office, which was known for its advanced capabilities in visual media production. That said, we cannot rule out the possibility that the intelligence gathering itself was in fact carried out by the Information Office, as we have already noted the longstanding connection between Hamas’s communications operatives and its OSINT. For the purposes of brevity, several more broadcasts will be summarized briefly below, with anecdotes cited. For example, the broadcast from the beginning of July 2013 contained descriptions of a comprehensive, brigade-wide drill conducted by the Golani Brigade in the Golan Heights; a new aircraft that Israel had purchased from the United States and its capabilities; and a large-scale drill by the Golani Brigade that included combat in urban areas, based partly on lessons learned from combat in Bint Jbeil during the Second Lebanon War in 2006. In addition, the broadcast covered a report from Israeli media about the Shayetet 13 unit and its past operations, including during the Second Intifada, as well as information about Iron Dome deployment in the north.[[178]](#footnote-178)

Another broadcast from the same month includes coverage of the IDF’s cyber and internet ops room and its attempts to respond to incidents in cyberspace; an Israel Air Force plane crash that killed Israeli pilots; negligence in the Prime Minister’s personal security, as someone had managed to bring a plastic handgun into his close proximity; and the protests of factory workers dismissed from their jobs.[[179]](#footnote-179) One September 2013 broadcast deals with the reestablishment of political relations between Israel and Egypt after the military coup; extensive analyses in the Israeli media of Israel’s geopolitical status in the Middle East and with regard to specific Middle East nations, including Israel’s policy on the ongoing Syrian civil war; the anticipated turnover of personnel in the highest echelons of the Israeli security establishment; and the dire economic straits endured by many soldiers, leading some to engage in criminal acts and ultimately receive prison sentences.[[180]](#footnote-180)

A broadcast from early October 2013 features an extended profile of Maj. Gen. Ram Rotenberg, the Israel Navy commander, and an examination of the Navy’s activity under his leadership, including questions regarding the defense of Israel’s offshore gas rigs and the submarines deployed by Israel. Other items deal with the political situation in Israel, including the funeral of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and the future of the Shas political party after Rabbi Yosef’s death, as well as the political links between politicians Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid.[[181]](#footnote-181) The following week’s broadcast surveys the Israeli media’s coverage of the discovery of a tunnel near Ein Hashlosha on the Gaza Strip-Israel border, an attempt to break into an IDF base with a military tractor, Chief of Staff Benny Gantz’s survey of the threats Israel faced by Israel at the time, and a warning issued by former Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin about the possibility of a third intifada. Another item covers an Israeli aerial exercise carried out thousands of miles away and analyzes the exercise in light of the ongoing nuclear talks between the United States and Iran.[[182]](#footnote-182)

**Conclusion**

The collection of OSINT is undoubtedly one of the means most accessible to any intelligence agency. The fact that it is freely available and inexpensive – certainly in the digital age, when most sources can be accessed from anywhere in the world at the click of a mouse – makes it useful not only to resource-rich state intelligence agencies, but all the more so to VNSAs with limited resources such as Hamas. Moreover, the fact that Israel is a democracy that ensures freedom of the press, including extensive coverage of military and security issues, is an advantage to any enemy seeking to gather OSINT. Although there is censorship in Israel, the Israeli media often lets some information slip, even if most of the story remains hidden when it comes to certain security issues. For years, Hamas has exploited this to the fullest extent possible.

From its earliest stages, the organization has gathered information from Israel’s open media. At first, this was done locally by Hebrew-speaking operatives to glean high-quality information from open sources; at times, they were the very same operatives who carried out the terrorist attacks. Gradually, the collection of OSINT became more orderly and was carried out both by the organization’s media and intelligence entities, systematically gathering information about a wide array of topics and from diverse media sources, both mainstream and marginal.

Operationally, Hamas has learned much from OSINT: troop placements, lessons and insights drawn from Israeli analyses of Hamas operations, heightened alerts in the IDF, and more. In terms of military infrastructure, Hamas has gathered considerable data about the IDF’s structure and units; weapons and armaments in use by Israeli security services, including the strengths and weaknesses of various systems; acquisitions processes; and the development of new technologies. One can clearly see that, for Hamas, OSINT is the most significant source for studying the strategic features of Israeli politics, decision-making processes, popular support for potential military operations, the Israeli home front’s emergency preparedness, Israel’s foreign relations, and more. Similarly, the organization takes a profound interest in matters related to Israeli society, including rifts and disagreements and any erosion of national resilience and motivation to fight, as it views these issues as Israel’s soft underbelly and a potential weakness to exploit.

Although the Israeli media are a reliable, accessible source for Hamas, they have sometimes proven to be a double-edged sword. As I will show below, Israeli decision-makers and the security establishment have exploited Hamas’s almost-absolute dependence on OSINT as its exclusive source of information about Israel’s intentions in order to dupe the organization,causing it to let its guard down and allowing Israel to carry out effective surprise attacks.[[183]](#footnote-183)

**Chapter 4: Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) and Cyber Warfare**

**Signal Intelligence (SIGINT)**

Before Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, there is no evidence that any of its operatives engaged in interception, although it is not inconceivable that some local, non-organized eavesdropping occurred on open tactical communications frequencies. There is, however, evidence that since June 2007, the organization has engaged in interception of both Palestinian and Israeli targets. According to certain reports, Hamas received some of the relevant equipment from Iranian sources soon after its rise to power in Gaza. At that time, Hamas intercepted the incoming and outgoing calls of dozens, perhaps hundreds of telephone numbers registered to senior figures and security personnel in the Palestinian Authority – potential targets for Hamas intelligence gathering. Hamas itself has denied these reports, but has admitted to cooperation with Iranian entities on unrelated issues.[[184]](#footnote-184) Given the collaboration presented above in other fields of intelligence, such as the development of UAVs,[[185]](#footnote-185) it is entirely possible that such cooperation extends also to SIGINT.

Equipment captured by Hamas in its seizure of the Gaza Strip also contributed to the organization’s capacities for interception. From at least the early 2000s, Hamas operatives have been aware of the capabilities of the Palestinian Authority’s intelligence apparatus; the Palestinian Authority received interception equipment and training from the CIA, sometimes aimed at Hamas personnel in keeping with the Palestinian Authority’s policy at that time. This led Hamas operatives to conduct themselves with greater secrecy and care.[[186]](#footnote-186) When Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip, they gained a new resource for interception, namely the equipment they now had at their disposal – the same equipment that had served as the foundation for the Palestinian Authority’s counterintelligence security apparatus, based in the neighborhood of Til al-Hauwa. According to the Shin Bet, Hamas suddenly found itself in possession of “equipment and machinery owned by the apparatus (including interception and communications equipment), which served as a ‘force multiplier’ for the organization in this field.”[[187]](#footnote-187)

The IDF’s fundamental assumption in Operation Cast Lead (December 2008–January 2009) was that Hamas was capable of intercepting communications traffic. Therefore, it attempted to encrypt as many of its frequencies as possible using a mobile system located in the combat theater.[[188]](#footnote-188) This assumption turned out to be correct. During the operation, in at least some cases, Hamas intercepted IDF communications by means of simple frequency scanners. Because of the Gaza Strip’s size and proximate fighting features between Hamas and the IDF, simple means of this kind are sufficient to eavesdrop on unencrypted tactical communications. As evidence of such activity, frequency scanners used to intercept IDF communications were captured in the operation.[[189]](#footnote-189)

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

4.1 Frequency scanners used by Hamas to intercept the IDF’s communications network during Operation Cast Lead. Featured in *Bamahaneh*, July 2, 2010, p. 10.

Hamas interception has not been conducted exclusively in the Gaza Strip. In recent years, Hamas has carried out some of its activity abroad, on Turkish soil. It appears that the shaky relations between Israel and Turkey over the last decade under the aegis of President Recep Tayyip *Erdoğan* have enabled Hamas to strengthen a base for the organization’s activity against Israel, including intelligence operations. In a 2019 interview, Suhaib Yusuf, a senior Hamas leader until his departure from the organization in mid-2019, detailed the intelligence activity in which he was personally involved. According to Yusuf, under the guise of a civilian company, Hamas established security centers in Turkey equipped with sophisticated interception devices. Yusuf stated that the interceptions are conducted on the conversations of Palestinian Authority residents, including senior figures, as well as senior Israelis. Moreover, the findings of the interception are also turned over to Iranian entities in exchange for financial support for the organization’s activities. Yusuf did not elaborate on the technological methods involved; however, because of the geographical distance, it is obvious that this SIGINT activity is supported by some type of cyber access and does not rely on the aerial interception of conversations.[[190]](#footnote-190)

Another SIGINT technique used by Hamas since the early 2000s is the interception of observation broadcasts transmitted by IDF aircraft engaged in forward observation. As the IDF stepped up its assassination activities during the al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas became more acutely aware of the importance of the IDF’s observation aircraft, especially UAVs, in the forward and continuing observation conducted for the assassinations.[[191]](#footnote-191) Therefore, Hamas began to look for possible solutions to counter this activity. One of these was the development of a method to intercept the communications channel that broadcast the observations to the ground. The organization claims that through reception of this channel, it occasionally managed to identify the locations surveilled by the aircraft ahead of time. As a result, it was able to provide early warning to operatives in the region under surveillance.[[192]](#footnote-192)

As noted, Hamas carried out this activity independently. However, it also benefited from similar activity carried out in this period by the Palestinian Authority. In the 2000s, the Palestinian Authority’s security apparatus carried out SIGINT activity using aircraft designed to track Israeli observation activity. Starting in 2001, Samir Mashrawi, the deputy head of the Palestinian Authority’s counterintelligence apparatus, was in charge of developing this capacity and operating it in conjunction with a member of the technical staff. At the outset, they developed only a partial capacity that presented an incomplete image; gradually, however, they were able to provide a continuous, clear picture. After the development of the necessary capacity, Palestinian Authority personnel observed two dedicated operations rooms, one in Gaza City and the other in the south of the Gaza Strip, in broadcasts, some of which were not yet encrypted. They tried to decode the image and understand the target observed by Israel. Sometimes they made these attempts from the war room; at other times, they went out on motorized patrols to identify the locations they had seen in the observation films.[[193]](#footnote-193)

This activity was often useful for Hamas. In one instance, for example, the Palestinian Authority war room noticed that a vehicle moving through the Islamic University of Gaza was being tracked. A quick check showed that the vehicle belonged to Ibrahim al-Maqadmah, a senior operative in Hamas’s military branch; the information was immediately passed on to al-Maqadmah by the Palestinian Authority’s contacts in Hamas, including 'Ismail Haniyyah.[[194]](#footnote-194) After Hamas’s rise to power in the Gaza Strip in 2007, the capabilities of Palestinian Authority’s security apparatus fell into Hamas’s hands. We may assume that the capacity described above was among them, and that it enhanced Hamas’s ability to intercept non-encrypted Israeli observation broadcasts.

Clearly, Hamas’s SIGINT capabilities remained fairly limited for many years. The organization did manage to access open tactical communications, an activity that we can reasonably assume is conducted extensively to this day; to a certain extent, this may even be true of cellular communications. Still, as demonstrated below, it seems that Hamas correctly identified the nascent potential in the transformation of telephones into de facto computers. By entering the world of cyberspace, it has acquired access to phone communications traffic in Israel without requiring any advanced SIGINT systems.

**Hamas Intelligence-Gathering Activity in Cyberspace**

Since at least 2014, Hamas has been extremely active in a variety of cyberspace activities targeting Israelis, primarily IDF and security services personnel. According to his testimony, Basil Salahiyyah, a member of Hamas’s military wing, established a special unit designed to enhance Hamas’s ability to gather data about Israel.[[195]](#footnote-195) It is likely that this unit was responsible for the 2014 operation known in Israel as Battle of Hunters. In this operation, Hamas operatives impersonated attractive women online; although some of these profiles were entirely fictitious, most were real Israeli Jewish women whose online identities had been stolen and appropriated by Hamas. The operatives contacted IDF soldiers, primarily those serving in combat units, over Facebook, and sent them private messages in Hebrew, including Hebrew slang typical of online conversations. After this initial correspondence, which sometimes also involved the exchange of photos, the Hamas operatives convinced the soldiers to communicate over a chat app developed by Hamas. There, as the conversations became more intimate, the chat app acted as spyware.[[196]](#footnote-196)

The soldiers were referred to an app store to download this particular chat app. In actuality, the app store had been constructed by Hamas, complete with other seemingly innocent apps that gave the store an air of credibility. Whenever a soldier downloaded the chat program to his phone, he provided Hamas with almost complete access to and control of his device. This included three major capacities: to turn on the device’s camera and photograph its surroundings; to eavesdrop by means of the device’s microphone, turning the microphone into what is known as a “roving bug”; and to pinpoint the device’s route and location through the use of its GPS. The chat app also granted Hamas access to the soldier’s contacts, messages, emails, photos, and videos. After gaining access to the device, Hamas operatives even succeeded in erasing the chat app and embedding low-signature tracking spyware. The IDF identified dozens of phones infected with Hamas’s software.[[197]](#footnote-197)



4.2 Fictitious profiles posted by Hamas online in 2016, some based on the stolen identities of real people (Source: IDF website)

One story that demonstrates this manner of attack is that of a soldier who was contacted on Facebook by a woman who introduced herself as having once served in the Israel Prisons Service. At first, the conversation was general and revolved around the soldier’s current activities in the army. After a few days of back-and-forth, the woman asked the soldier to download an app where they could continue chatting. He tried, but was unable to open it on his device, so the two maintained their correspondence on Facebook. Eventually, IDF personnel identified the woman as a fictitious profile operated by Hamas and informed the soldier, who then cut off all contact.

The following is a detailed example of Hamas correspondence with soldiers, meant to illustrate the social engineering tactics deployed by Hamas in the service of its cyberattacks.[[198]](#footnote-198) At first, the profile engages the soldier on the other side to exchange basic information:[[199]](#footnote-199)

A screenshot of a chat

Description automatically generated

4.3 This is how the IDF revealed Hamas' attempt to take over soldiers' phones.

(Source: IDF website)

|  |
| --- |
| JUL 26 at 13:34  Fake profile: Good afternoon, sweetie.  […]  Soldier: LOL, great, we can get to know one another if you want.  Fake profile: Of course, honey.  Soldier: Where you from?  Fake profile: Ashkelon. And you?  Soldier: How old are you?  Fake profile: 24. And you?  Soldier: I’m 20. What do you do?  Fake profile: I work. And you?  Soldier: Soldier [smiley]  Fake profile: Nice. |

The profile learns where the soldier’s unit is stationed and determines its activities in the sector. As pictured below, the profile sends the soldier encouragement, and attaches a photo of an attractive young woman in order to sustain believability and keep the soldier engaged:[[200]](#footnote-200)

A screenshot of a couple of women

Description automatically generated

4.4 The continuation of the correspondence.

(Source: IDF website)

|  |
| --- |
| Fake profile: Whare [sic] are you serving?  Soldier: [NAME OF UNIT REDACTED]. We’re in [NAME OF SECTOR REDACTED].  Fake profile: You poor thing. Take care of yourself, honey.  Soldier: Thanks, sweetie. Taking care of myself and the country [smiley].  Fake profile: What you [sic] do there?  Soldier: [INFORMATION ABOUT ROUTINE SECURITY IN THE SECTOR REDACTED].  Fake profile: Hang on, I’ll send you a picture.  Soldier: OK LOL  Fake profile: [PHOTO] |

After establishing her cover story, the Hamas profile asks the soldier to download the app that will allow Hamas to access his device:

A screenshot of a chat

Description automatically generated4.5 Right: An excerpt from the

continued correspondence.

Left: The app used by Hamas

during the attack operation.

(Source: IDF website)

|  |
| --- |
| Fake profile: No.  You can go to the YC app. Where did you disappeare [sic]?  Soldier: What’s that app?  I’m right here, sweetie.  Fake profile: A simple app for video chats. |

In this way, Hamas successfully targeted dozens of active-duty soldiers, some of whom indeed took the bait. The organization made use of this tactic throughout the entire wave of attacks, which continued for approximately two years until the IDF resolved to expose Hamas’s cyber activity.

According to Salahiyyah, his unit managed to contact a soldier in the Artillery Corps during Operation Protective Edge by impersonating a fictitious profile, and thus succeeded in penetrating his cell phone and identifying his location. Salahiyyah further said that the location data was passed on to the commander of the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam’s s Gaza City Southern Brigade, who instructed the rocket unit under his command to aim at this location. This action seems to have been successful, at least based on the fact that the organization claims to have read a message sent by the same soldier to his family saying that he had been wounded in action.[[201]](#footnote-201)

It seems that penetration of soldiers’ cell phones successfully granted Hamas access to the soldiers’ correspondences and locations. It is interesting to see how, according to Salahiyyah, these efforts to locate the soldiers led to a comprehensive intelligence operation on the part of Hamas. Although the operation was instigated to gather intelligence through cyberattacks, it also brought to bear other intelligence channels maintained by the organization. Salahiyyah claims that, starting in January 2016, the organization recorded the locations of soldiers’ phones inside the Gaza Strip (he names the individual soldiers), as well as correspondence among soldiers, including a correspondence between an Israeli soldier and a fake Hamas profile, that revealed that the soldiers were working on underground tunneling.[[202]](#footnote-202) Salahiyyah mapped the locations of IDF personnel as disclosed by their phones and concluded that they were digging tunnels from the Israeli side into the Gaza Strip. Later, Salahiyyah’s cyber activity and social engineering of human sources within the IDF were supported by OSINT: broadcasts from the Israeli media in which residents of the region adjacent to the Gaza Strip reported hearing the digging of tunnels and complained of the security establishment’s impotence. To Salahiyyah, this suggested that the digging was being done by the Israeli side.[[203]](#footnote-203)

At this point, Salahiyyah decided to add geospatial intelligence to his arsenal. Using an UAV, he identified sites that would seem to indicate the digging of tunnels in the locations obtained by the cyberattacks. Salahiyyah reported that the UAV’s flight showed considerable digging, with dozens of trucks appearing to cart sand or mud from mobile structures – to Salahiyyah’s mind, further evidence that Israel was digging tunnels. In mid-2017, Hamas obtained a device that could sense digging, apparently by identifying metals such as copper. Thus, according to Salahiyyah, more than a few tunnels were found, and photos of these tunnels were obtained by hacking the soldiers’ phones. Counterintelligence operations also contributed to the effort. According to Salahiyyah, some of the tunnels were located using the confessions of Palestinian collaborators with Israel arrested by Hamas’s internal security forces: They revealed that their handlers had instructed them to buy certain tracts of land and structures in the Gaza Strip that could serve as tunnel exits. All of this information led Salahiyyah to conclude that these tunnels were meant to serve the IDF in Israel’s next large-scale operation in the Gaza Strip. After an opening air strike, familiar from prior operations, Israeli forces would then emerge from these tunnels dressed like Hamas fighters to confuse the real Hamas operatives and attack deep inside Gaza. Salahiyyah claims that this information was presented to the senior ranks of Hamas, but Hamas leadership was inclined to dismiss it. The chief opponent of Salahiyyah’s thesis was Marwan 'Issa,[[204]](#footnote-204) the head of Hamas’s military wing.

The intent here is not to evaluate Salahiyyah’s analysis of the existence of tunnels from Israel to the Gaza Strip and of the IDF’s next operation there. Nonetheless, the intelligence process described by Salahiyyah demonstrates how Hamas’s entrance into cyberspace gave it access to information that, until then, had remained beyond its reach. Furthermore, Hamas’s activity in cyberspace served as a foundation for other intelligence efforts and capabilities, which attests to the advances in intelligence achieved by Hamas over the years.

In 2016, Hamas made additional use of Facebook, fabricating profiles of soldiers. In this case, too, some of the profiles were constructed through identity theft from real individuals. Using these identities as cover, Hamas managed to gain access to unofficial groups for IDF units, mostly reservist units. Some of these were closed groups that Hamas operatives received permission to join. In these groups, Hamas got firsthand exposure to group members’ conversations about the nature of the units, as well as the units’ past, present, and future activities. For example, Hamas operatives asked for information about past or upcoming training and exercises, and in some cases were provided with details.[[205]](#footnote-205)

Throughout 2018, Hamas perpetrated another wave of cyberspace activity against Israeli soldiers. At that point, too, the organization made use of fictitious social media profiles and contacted IDF soldiers over WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. It is clear that Hamas once again used the stolen identities of real internet users. The testimony of the soldiers attacked indicates a shared basic structure: A Hamas operative introduces himself as a soldier, either male or female – though always of the opposite sex to the target – and seeks to develop a friendly relationship with the target. Over the course of the conversation, the Hamas operative asks the soldier to download an app from an official app store to chat further and exchange photographs. Below are several cases that demonstrate this common arc.

A female IDF soldier serving as a field observer received a WhatsApp message from someone who introduced himself as a soldier in the Golani Brigade; his profile picture did in fact show a serviceman with the brigade’s distinctive beret. The young woman was suspicious of the message and showed it to the women serving with her. It then emerged that the same “soldier” had contacted some of them in a similar vein, though with slightly different wording, and had also attempted to “friend” them. Because of the women’s suspicions, nothing further developed.[[206]](#footnote-206) In another case, an IDF serviceman, Sgt. R., testified that in early 2018 a woman named Lina Kramer, a fictitious profile created by Hamas, contacted him over Facebook and the two started to chat. After a while, they moved to chatting over WhatsApp; “Lina” then asked Sgt. R. to download an app called GlanceLove from the Google App Store. Sgt. R. tried to download the app, but when he ran into problems with the download, he started to suspect something was wrong, cut off all contact, and reported the incident to the relevant military parties. Yet another soldier testified that he had received a Facebook message from an unfamiliar young woman, also a fake Hamas profile, and the two started to chat. The “woman” wanted to know his position in the army. The two conducted further conversations over WhatsApp. She asked him if he wanted pictures of her; he answered in the affirmative, and she asked him to download a certain photo app from the Google App Store. “She” did in fact send him several photos, but here, too, contact was cut off before anything else happened. Some of the soldiers contacted noticed that the Hebrew used by the fake profiles was not perfect, which the profiles explained by claiming that they were new immigrants and that their Hebrew was not yet colloquial or grammatically correct.[[207]](#footnote-207)

Once again, the apps were malware that Hamas had developed and presented as innocent chat apps. As in similar cases, as soon as the target downloaded this malware to their mobile phones, Hamas received full access to the phones and an opportunity to gather a vast array of data. This meant the ability to access all contacts, SMS messages, call history, files, and photos, and even remove them at will, as well as the capacity to pinpoint the device’s location. The app allowed Hamas to turn the cellphone into a roving bug capable of overhearing anything said in the device’s vicinity, as well as to open the camera and take photographs. The IDF’s assessment of this wave of attacks is that Hamas failed, largely because the army’s campaign to raise awareness of the phenomenon in the wake of Operation Hunters Battle, described above, led soldiers to be on their guard. Therefore, Hamas did not manage to gather high-value data. Still, it is not inconceivable that the contacts they amassed could serve the organization to broaden the reach of a future wave of attacks.

|  |
| --- |
| 4.6 Left: Sample of correspondence between a Hamas operative using a fake profile and an IDF serviceman in which the operative asks him to download the app.  Right: Sample of the fictitious profiles Liron Goren and Julia Stark, based on real profiles whose details were stolen. Hamas used photos that showed a relationship between the profiles to enhance their verisimilitude. (source: IDF website). |

A screenshot of a group of girls

Description automatically generated

|  |
| --- |
| Fake profile: Do you have Google Play?  Soldier: I do.  Fake profile: Search for GlanceLove.  Soldier: Where?  Fake profile: In the store.  [IMAGE]  Soldier: ? |

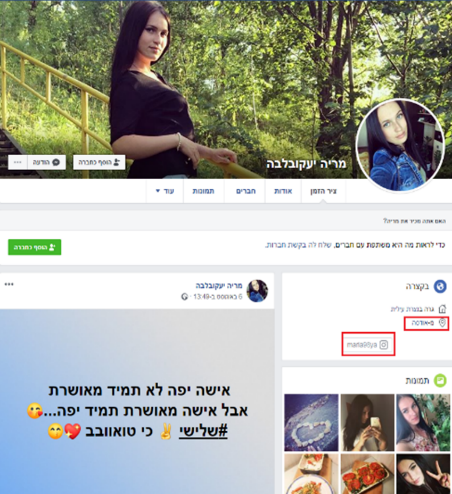
In August 2018, at the height of a round of fighting with Israel in which Hamas launched hundreds of rockets, the organization also carried out a cyberattack. Hamas built an app similar to RedAlert, an app that issues warnings for rocket launches in real time as part of Israel’s Red Color early warning system. The organization distributed the malicious app using social media such as WhatsApp, as well as bots[[208]](#footnote-208) and fake profiles on Facebook and Twitter, and included a link to the site israelalerts.us for download. IsraelAlert, the app developed by Hamas, has an appearance reminiscent of the original app in order to enhance its credibility and entice Israelis to download it. It is clear that Hamas developed the software as an “off-the-shelf product” to be deployed in any renewed fighting in parallel with rocket fire during escalations. When the time came, Hamas would launch this ready-made tool.[[209]](#footnote-209)

An analysis of the software carried out by the information security company that exposed the software shows that, from the moment the user downloads and installs the software on his or her device, Hamas has full control of that device. This includes a range of possibilities and access: tracking the location and movement of the device; taking photographs, videos, and audio recordings; establishing contact; and sending messages. Furthermore, after the software is installed, it is very difficult to remove access. Even deletion of the app does not prevent Hamas from accessing the device, because deletion does not remove the hidden components installed as spyware.[[210]](#footnote-210)

In tandem with the IsraelAlert attack, the information security company identified an additional attack from Hamas. In this case, Hamas fabricated a sign-up form for Cellcom’s[[211]](#footnote-211) TV service. In downloading the counterfeit form, the unsuspecting user is also downloading malware designed for computers and smartphones.[[212]](#footnote-212) During the same period, Hamas opened a fake Facebook account in the name of Mag. Gen. (res.) Tal Rousso, who at that time had already been discharged from the army and was running for Knesset as a Labor Party candidate.[[213]](#footnote-213) It remains unclear what Hamas had in mind for that Facebook page; however, based on the organization’s patterns of activity, it is not inconceivable that it was meant as a future platform for social engineering as part of Hamas’s cyberspace operations.

In 2019, Hamas released another wave of cyberattacks against IDF personnel. Some features of the attacks in this wave were similar to those used in previous attacks, as will be demonstrated below. Once again, the method used was phishing[[214]](#footnote-214) by means of falsified social media profiles in order to initiate conversations that would lead soldiers to download malware onto their smartphones. Yet this wave was more advanced than its predecessors in several ways.[[215]](#footnote-215)

This time, Hamas used six central fictitious profiles bearing Israeli names (e.g., Eden Ben Ezra), some with a touch of the foreign about them (e.g., Maria Yakovleva), under the cover story that they were recent immigrants – which explained the errors in their Hebrew. Furthermore, the profiles were fleshed out in much greater depth than before. For example, the profile for Sarah Orlova was shown as living in the city of Netanya, and it listed both the school Sarah had attended and her birthplace (Cologne, Germany). In addition, like many online profiles, her Facebook wall featured an introductory sentence formulated in contemporary, slangy Hebrew – “One day, life will pass before your eyes. Make sure it’s worth watching” – as well as several hashtags. The profile had photos that enhanced its verisimilitude. Notably, this time, Hamas edited the photos so that it would be difficult to locate them through an online search.[[216]](#footnote-216)



4.7 Sample of a Hamas Facebook profile (Source: IDF Spokesperson’s Unit).

This time, the attack’s modus operandi was as follows: Using the fictitious profiles, Hamas operatives contacted IDF service members – this time not only combat soldiers, but also combat support troops and those serving on the home front. Contact was established by means of several social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), including Telegram, which is considered more secure. After the initial contact, the fake profiles asked or enticed their Israeli targets to download software that would facilitate the exchange of temporary photos, much like the well-known app Snapchat. In these attacks, Hamas’s social engineering has noticeably improved: Some of the profiles introduced themselves as hard of hearing in order to avoid voice calls, while others answered with very brief voice messages to enhance their believability.[[217]](#footnote-217)

Evidence submitted by individuals who were in contact with these fictitious profiles indicates that the Hamas operatives took further steps to strengthen their identity. According to one soldier’s testimony, his new acquaintance asked him to congratulate her and wish her a happy life on her Facebook page; the goal was to enliven the profile with authentic contact in order to strengthen the impression that this was a real person. According to another target, the fictitious profile posted photos of herself, and he commented on the photos on her page. Another attempt to bolster the credibility of these pages is evident where, before the Jewish New Year holiday of Rosh Hashana, one fake profile posted the traditional greeting “A good week and a happy New Year to my friends” – evidence that this was a regular person living a typical Israeli existence.[[218]](#footnote-218)

|  |
| --- |
| 4.8 Examples of correspondence between Hamas operatives and IDF soldiers, some of which was conducted over Telegram (Source: IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, February 16, 2020). |

A screenshot of a chat

Description automatically generated

|  |
| --- |
| Soldier: LOL. Where’re you from?  Fake profile: Upper Nazareth. You?  Soldier: [REDACTED]  Fake profile: Nice! Close by.  Soldier: Are you free on weekends?  Fake profile: Sure, sweetie.  Soldier: Great! Have plans for Friday night?  [The fake profile sends a picture, ostensibly of herself]  Fake profile: Put catchandsee into Google.  After you download it, enter my email.  Soldier: Cool.  Fake profile: Did you do it?  Soldier: Downloading, wait a sec.  Fake profile: Okay, sweetie.  Soldier: Sorry, sweetie, it’s not working for me.  Fake profile: I’ll send it here, but delete them.  Soldier: Cool. |

In terms of the malware itself, it was clear that Hamas’s capabilities had advanced since the previous attacks. The targets were asked to download applications called GrixyApp, ZatuApp, and Catch&See using a direct link rather than from an app store – presumably, the lesson learned from the previous attack was that this would reduce their risk of exposure. After the victim downloaded the app to their smartphone and tried to open it, he or she would get an error message saying that the software was unsupported by the device; the software would appear to be deleted from the device. In practice, however, the software continued to operate behind the scenes. The malware itself was equipped with all the capacities demonstrated by the malware in previous attacks, such as transferring files from the device, taking photographs remotely, accessing the device’s location, contacts, and text messages, and carrying out remote eavesdropping through a roving bug on the device’s microphone. According to the IDF’s analysis (the army managed to hack the servers used by Hamas to orchestrate the attack), Hamas succeeded in infecting dozens of IDF servers in this wave. Nonetheless, the army’s official assessment is that Hamas once again failed to steal any classified or sensitive material.[[219]](#footnote-219)

In April 2022, the data security firm Cybereason exposed further Hamas activity in cyberspace. The organization’s technique was familiar from previous attacks: the construction of fake profiles of attractive women on social media. This time, the profiles were set up to show the accounts “following” Israeli media channels and political figures. Hamas not only persuaded victims to download Hamas-built malware that would give it full control of all mobile device data, but also steered the conversation to sexual matters. At a certain point, the fake profile would send the victim an .rar file containing a video of supposedly pornographic content that was in fact Hamas malware. The moment the content was run, the program granted Hamas a near-limitless ability to withdraw and control data from the device. According to Cybereason’s analysis, the infrastructure in use had been improved since previous activities, which had targeted other Middle East targets, not only Israelis.[[220]](#footnote-220)

In mid-2022, Hamas carried out another wave of attacks in social media, an operation referred to by the IDF as “Endgame.” In this wave, Hamas’s modus operandi was, again, familiar: fictitious accounts on social media such as Telegram, posing as Israeli women, that contacted soldiers and asked their victims to download an ostensibly harmless app to their smartphones. The app was, of course, malware. However, in Endgame, Hamas also made use of an additional spreading technique: the organization developed a game app that would infect the victims’ devices. In Endgame, Hamas succeeded in gaining access to dozens of mobile devices used by Israeli soldiers.[[221]](#footnote-221)

During this period, however, Hamas did not limit itself to attacks on individuals. The organization also carried out attacks on Israeli information systems and found various ways to distribute malware. In January 2018, Hamas launched another cyberattack that included attempts to connect to the IDF’s field observation network in the West Bank, a military system with a link to the civilian internet. An army investigation proved beyond a doubt that Hamas’s cyberspace infrastructure was behind the attack. It further showed that the hackers had come within an inch of successfully penetrating the field observation network. This would have allowed Hamas to gather data on the IDF’s intelligence-gathering capabilities, the locations of sensors, and the data collected, not to mention disrupt their operations.[[222]](#footnote-222)

In this context, it bears mentioning that Hamas’s attempts to penetrate Israel’s forward observation and security camera systems from cyberspace have led to stricter guidelines for these systems’ cybersecurity. During Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021, the IDF contacted Israeli civilians living near the Gaza Strip and asked them to unplug their webcams lest Hamas hackers penetrate their computers, see their photos, and perhaps seize control of them for their own ends. The recommendation was not issued to private citizens; rather, it was directed only at the communities’ means of observation, where each community has a security arrangement intended to protect it against outside penetration.[[223]](#footnote-223)

Over the past few years, another platform has been seen operating in cyberspace in a somewhat different format. In May 2015, the Molerats hacker group went on the offensive. Signs indicate that the group operates from the Gaza Strip, and that it has continued to remain active since 2015. Before examining the platform’s activity in detail, we should note that the platform’s affiliation with Hamas has been deemed highly probable by information security investigators, but it has not yet been authenticated by any official entity. Therefore, its activity will be presented herein, but conclusive proof is still needed that this is indeed a Hamas platform.[[224]](#footnote-224)

As part of a campaign called DustySky, waged from 2015–2016, attacks were launched against numerous targets in the Middle East – in Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the UAE – as well as in Europe and the United States. The targets tended to be identified with government and diplomatic entities, often embassies, or with security industries, financial institutions, newspapers, or software developers. While the attacks were based on social engineering tactics, the cover stories were not adapted to each target separately. This was not a “spraying” attack, in which the same email is broadly distributed to a wide range of targets: Hamas used a number of different mail templates. Still, the same content and phishing subject line were sent to a group of targets rather than individually tailored messages, although the language chosen – Hebrew, Arabic, or English – was customized to the target.[[225]](#footnote-225)

The attack involved an email from a fictitious sender who identified himself using names such as “Latest News from Israel,” “Israel Defense Forces,” and so on, in the language of the receiver. The email contained either a ZIP/RAR file attachment or a link. When the email contained a file, the device would be infected with the malware as soon as the user downloaded the file, although the user would only be able to see a normal file such as Word. Subject lines and file names were related to current events, such as photographs released by Hamas of Gilad Shalit’s captivity, or were pornographic in nature. The file visible to the user would contain information copied from a popular news site in the relevant language.[[226]](#footnote-226)

When the email contained a link rather than a file, a user clicking the link would reach a screen with contents matching the subject line; at the same time, malware was downloaded onto his or her computer. If the computer under attack used an operating system other than Windows, the malware was incapable of attaching itself. This did not deter the hackers – they simply steered the user to an email service page similar to that of Gmail, where the user would enter their username and password, thus providing it to the hackers. In the course of this wave of attacks, software developers were targeted via a wanted ad saying that professionals were wanted to develop a certain software similar to a familiar, existing package, which they attached as a download with the ad. In practice, the downloaded file also installed the malware alongside the software. This may have been an attempt to gain access to technological information stored on their targets’ computers and/or the foundation for carrying out proxy attacks from their computers.[[227]](#footnote-227)

Once the computers were infected, the hackers started scanning them, looking for files containing certain keywords, such as “homeland security” and “contacts.” This indicates that the hackers were interested in personal documents and contents, permissions, and passwords, as well as topics related to security. The hackers also downloaded commercial software that collates all the passwords used on the computer. In at least one case, it was possible to see that the hackers entered a target’s email account using the target’s username and password. From the moment it was installed on the computer, the malware allowed the hackers to carry out a variety of actions: running commands and installing software, turning off and restarting the computer, keylogging, locating information, and replicating the malware on detachable media connected to the computer, such as USB drives.[[228]](#footnote-228)

After the information security company ClearSky exposed this cyber platform, it ceased its activity at once. After a 20-day period, it resumed its operations, following a similar outline but with new and up-to-date content relevant to all Middle East targets except Israel. Only in April 2016 did signs emerge that activity was once again directed also at Israeli victims. This renewed campaign was also designed to gather information. Among the destinations attacked in this second wave were Israeli banks; Israeli security companies; diplomats serving in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, including the Egyptian ambassador to Ukraine; personnel in the Prime Minister’s Office of the Palestinian Authority; senior personnel at Bir Zeit University; a former British politician; and an individual working in the U.S. State Department. Once again, the hackers looked for passwords and personal details, but also sought financial information, such as Bitcoin and PayPal, and demonstrated a clear interest in security matters, using keywords such as “Shabak,” “Mossad,” “tunnel,” and “intelligence.”[[229]](#footnote-229)

It is fascinating to witness the Molerats’ daring in this campaign. ClearSky’s first report, issued on January 7, 2016, noted that the company had identified one of the hackers but had decided not to publish his name. On January 18, a member of the hacker group, using an email ostensibly from the IDF, contacted ClearSky to request information about the individual identified by the company. Several days later, one of the hackers called the company on the phone, introduced himself as a victim of the attack, and asked for information about the identity discovered by the company. He was asked to send an email with his request, which arrived on January 23. The company did not accede to either of the two requests, but used the data it had collected to verify the identity of the hacker. In its second report, issued in June 2016, the company identified the individual as Mu'aiya 'Ayish, a young man from the Gaza Strip, based on an in-depth online investigation.[[230]](#footnote-230)

In 2020, further activity from the platform was identified, attacking numerous computers throughout the Middle East. Here, too, the method of attack involved social engineering; users were lured into clicking on seemingly innocent emails about current events relevant to the Middle East, such as then-Prime Minister Netanyahu’s meetings with Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. When victims opened the link in the email, a “backdoor” software was installed on the computer through which the hackers could extract contents from the computer and even install updates to the malware. It is obvious that the attack was aimed at high-ranking figures in the Middle East, especially in the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, the UAE, and Turkey.[[231]](#footnote-231)

To what extent have Hamas’s cyberspace operations become a significant component of the organization’s activities, and to what extent are they perceived by Israel as a threat? A partial answer may be found in Israel’s attacks on Hamas’s cyber capabilities during Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021.[[232]](#footnote-232) As early as May 2019, after Hamas attempted a cyberattack on Israel, the building from which Hamas’s hackers worked was attacked for the first time.[[233]](#footnote-233) Two years later, during Operation Guardian of the Walls, the attack was more extensive; it was fairly clear that the IDF had a shelf-ready plan activated during the operation, in which the IDF bombed more than ten operational centers, in high-rises in Gaza as well as in private dwellings where cyberactivity was taking place, and assassinated many of Hamas’s cyberspace operatives. The most senior of these individuals was Jum'ah al-Tahala, Hamas’s director of research and development, who worked on the technological aspects of several fields, including rockets and UAVs, and led Hamas’s cyberspace operatives. Many others who worked under him to implement cyberactivity against Israeli targets were likewise eliminated.[[234]](#footnote-234)

**Conclusion**

From a technological perspective, SIGINT is considered the most complex of the disciplines discussed in this study. The broad and effective collection of SIGINT requires technological equipment and extensive professional skill to operate and to extract knowledge from the mass of data produced by communications traffic on the other side. Therefore, there is a significant gap between Hamas’s activity in this sphere and its activity in others. While Hamas has achieved the ability to monitor the IDF's tactical communications, which requires only relatively basic equipment, and has apparently also developed some ability to intercept cellular traffic, which undoubtedly enriches the organization’s tactical intelligence, these appear to be the limits of its activity. Unlike Hizballah, for example, which has steady support and uninterrupted contact with Iran to provide it with training and eavesdropping equipment, Hamas is isolated in the closed-off environs of the Gaza Strip, a fact that prevents it from developing advanced capabilities for SIGINT interception.

When it comes to cyberspace, however, the situation differs. While operating in this sphere also requires technological skill and professionalism, it is a skill that may, up to a point, be acquired regardless of geographical location or contact with nations possessing advanced capabilities. At least since 2014, Hamas has compensated for its difficulty in intercepting cellular communications by penetrating the smartphones of IDF service members through cyberspace. It has thus gained access to conversations and data on locations without having to intercept signals or develop pinpoint location ability. Hamas has consistently studied its attack targets and has gradually improved its online social engineering techniques to infect targets with malware.

It is noteworthy that, in its cyber operations, Hamas exploits the fact that Israeli society is relatively open and free. Soldiers arrive at their bases with their smartphones and carry them for much of the time they spend in a military setting. They make free use of various social media, which opens a pathway for Hamas to infect these phones and obtain military information of interest to the organization.

This activity provides stark evidence that cyberspace is an ideal platform for a VNSA, such as terrorist organization, at war with a state. It is relatively inexpensive; one can operate it with few risks; it is independent of geographical location; and it allows the warring party to exploit the fact that the other side is technologically advanced and reliant on internet-based technologies. This poses a significant challenge to Israel. As Maj. Gen. Nadav Padan, Director of the Computer Service Directorate in the IDF, said in June 2017:

The IDF runs into relatively unsophisticated players such as Hizballah and Hamas who, using simple tools, succeed in perturbing us more than a little. Unlike in the past, we understand that we must now conduct a real campaign against them, which requires that we have technological and operational superiority.[[235]](#footnote-235)

Former Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon defined cyberspace as “a sphere of asymmetrical activity in which an attacker can make significant gains at low costs.”[[236]](#footnote-236) The fact that Hamas’s cyberspace activity is indeed a problem for Israel and a strength of the organization is also evident from the fact that its installations and personnel have been deemed a legitimate target for attack and elimination, as demonstrated by Israel in Operation Guardian of the Walls.

**Chapter 5: Counterintelligence**

Counterintelligence is crucial to the activity of any VNSA, especially a terrorist organization waging an asymmetrical war against a more powerful state enemy that deploys advanced intelligence capabilities. Terrorist organizations must make a comprehensive and intense counterintelligence effort in order to guarantee the survival of their operatives and maintain the secrecy of the activities they are planning.[[237]](#footnote-237)

It is customary to distinguish between defensive and offensive counterintelligence.[[238]](#footnote-238)This chapter focuses on Hamas’s defensive counterintelligence activities against Israel’s intelligence services over the years. The organization’s offensive counterintelligence activities are described in other chapters, in particular the topic of doubling agents (Chapter 2) and deception (Chapter 6).

**Hamas’s Battle against the HUMINT Threat**

From its inception, Hamas was characterized by secrecy. Its 1988 covenant stated that the group welcomes every Muslim who meets certain criteria, one of which was “keeping [its] secrets.”[[239]](#footnote-239) In a 2004 interview for Israel’s Channel 10, reporter Shlomi Eldar asked Isma'il Haniyyah whether concealing the identities of the individuals appointed to replace Shaikh Yassin and al-Rantisi after the assassinations of the latter in March 2004 would prevent Israeli intelligence from getting to the new leaders. Haniyyah responded: “In principle, from the day it was founded, Hamas has been a secret movement. In other words, its leadership and institutions operate clandestinely, and in this there has been no change.”[[240]](#footnote-240)

***Activity against Suspected Collaborators***

Hamas’s first intelligence entity, called al-Majd (Munazamat al-Jihad wa-al-Dawa, literally “the glory”), was already in operation well before the founding of Hamas, working within the several Islamist entities that prefigured the organization. Its objective was to gather intelligence on people suspected of collaborating with Israel or of committing moral offenses such as drug use or prostitution.[[241]](#footnote-241) To that end, its operatives conducted surveillance and forward observation. Dozens of members recruited by this apparatus surveilled suspects and documented their activities in formal reports that were subsequently submitted to their superiors in the organization. The reports not only compiled incriminating information about the suspects, but made note of suspects’ routines, so that the organization could choose the appropriate time and place to abduct and interrogate the suspects.[[242]](#footnote-242) In these remarkably cruel interrogations, the operatives elicited confessions of questionable validity that the suspects were indeed collaborators with Israeli intelligence. At that point, the sentence – usually execution – would be carried out.[[243]](#footnote-243)

This activity was accompanied by an attempt to win over the hearts and minds of the Palestinian population, often by means of proclamations, the primary propaganda tool used at the time. One of the first proclamations issued by the organization that would become Hamas only a few weeks later – just before the start of the First Intifada, in late November 1987 – warned against collaboration with the Israeli intelligence services and proposed various strategies to combat their tactics.[[244]](#footnote-244)

From the early days of al-Majd, the organization’s interrogations of collaborators received a clear religious-legal imprimatur from Shaikh Yassin. Yassin ruled that a person who confessed to this transgression (or to involvement in prostitution) should be executed on the basis of Islamic law, although he emphasized the need to ascertain that the suspect had in fact done the deeds of which he was accused. Indeed, al-Majd operatives in the al-Burij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip put this ruling into practice. They arrested a man accused of collaborating with Israel and distributing pornography; the man was tortured and interrogated until he confessed. A recording of the confession was shown to Shaikh Yassin, who authorized the execution. This was the first instance of a lengthy campaign of intelligence collection, arrests, interrogations, and assaults on those suspected of collaborating with Israel, activity that continued into the First Intifada.[[245]](#footnote-245) During this period, after receiving initial information about a suspect, al-Majd operatives would sometimes surveil the suspect for several days before abducting him.[[246]](#footnote-246)

Interestingly, many Hamas operatives who would later become senior figures in the organization started out as members of al-Majd. The first head of al-Majd was Sallah Shkhadah; after Shkhadah’s arrest in 1988, he was replaced by Nazar 'Awadallah. Khalid al-Hindi, known by the code name “45,” was appointed to head al-Majd’s activity in the northern Gaza Strip, while Yahiya Sinwar – Hamas’s current leader in the Gaza Strip – held the same role in the south. Both regional leaders set up local cells to compile reports about Gaza Strip residents suspected of any type of crime and submit them using dead drops.[[247]](#footnote-247) It seems that al-Hindi was the senior of the two, as he ultimately collected the reports gathered in both regions.[[248]](#footnote-248) Isma'il Haniyyah, a former prime minister and currently the head of Hamas’s political bureau, was recruited to al-Majd in 1986, after representing the Muslim Brotherhood on the student council of the Islamic University.[[249]](#footnote-249) Muhammad al-Shimali, a regiment commander in Rafah during Operation Cast Lead, became involved with Hamas as an al-Majd operative during the First Intifada.[[250]](#footnote-250) Abed al-Nasser Abu Shauka, head of the military wing in the central Gaza Strip until his death in 2004, began his career with Hamas when he was recruited to al-Majd sometime before 1987, as a student at the Islamic University in Gaza.[[251]](#footnote-251) It is possible that the considerable power held by al-Majd operatives – not only to gather intelligence, but to accuse, convict, and even execute suspected collaborators – eventually paved their way into the Hamas elite.

As befits a security apparatus, al-Majd was fiercely protective of its information and activity, as evidenced by the culture of security it implemented among its operatives. The reports compiled by the organization’s operatives were passed on to senior figures using dead drops arranged in advance at the al-Haushi mosque in Shuja'iyyah; maps marked with the locations of the dead drops were given to operatives by a cleric at the mosque. After the senior operatives read the collated information, it was then hidden at the 'Abu-'Othman mosque in Shuja'iyyah. Furthermore, meetings among the apparatus operatives were coordinated by leaving signs in neutral locations (e.g., youth clubs) without the use of telephones.[[252]](#footnote-252) Even after the founding of Hamas in 1987, operatives remained meticulous in matters of secrecy. Coded messages continued to be transmitted via dead drops in central locations, particularly mosques; operatives went by code names. Furthermore, Hamas insisted on absolute compartmentalization; every operative knew only the members of his own cell and sometimes only their code names, thus preventing members from incriminating one another. Shaikh Yassin himself communicated with various organization functionaries through dispatches delivered by special couriers.[[253]](#footnote-253)

After the arrest of several Hamas leaders in August 1988, the leadership began to reorganize in September 1988 on the basis of directives sent by Shaikh Yassin from prison. In addition to a division of the Gaza Strip into seven geographical regions, Hamas set up three systems of activity: one dedicated to military action, one responsible for the coordination of intifada activity, and one to serve as security. This latter security system gathered intelligence about intifada incidents while continuing its counterintelligence operations against suspected collaborators with Israel and entities operating counter to the “spirit of Islam.” The security wing was headed by Isma'il Ashqar and Nabil Sawalha.[[254]](#footnote-254)

After another round of arrests in May 1989, Hamas was forced to reorganize again, this time with the help of American Hamas members such as Musa Abu Marzuk. The Gaza Strip was redivided into five regions, and several new mechanisms were established. It was decided that the security apparatus, charged with gathering intelligence on suspected collaborators with Israel and with preventing the penetration of collaborators into the organization, would continue its operations. The information gathered by the security apparatus enabled Hamas’s executive arm to enforce the directives issued by the organization, interrogating, attacking, and often killing suspected collaborators.[[255]](#footnote-255) It is worth noting that several months after his appointment as Hamas commander in the Gaza Strip in September 1988, Isma'il Abu Shanab received a report from the security apparatus stating that two suspected collaborators had been killed. Consequently, it occurred to Abu Shanab that Hamas may have been going too far with its executions, and he requested that future executions be performed only after consultation with the organization’s leadership. Likewise, he instructed the regional commanders to verify suspicions leveled against suspects before subjecting them to harm; apparently his instruction went unheeded, as acts of violence against suspected collaborators persisted.[[256]](#footnote-256)

It seems that from its reorganization in September 1989 until the next round of arrests at the end of 1990, Hamas’s security apparatus functioned in a relatively orderly fashion and with a clear hierarchy. Its responsibilities included preventing the infiltration of collaborators, as well as gathering intelligence about suspected collaborators, IDF activities and residents’ contacts with Israeli army representatives, and other Palestinian organizations such as Fatah. An example of the organization’s systematic operations can be found in the apparatus’s activity in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. Every operative had a specified area, generally a single street, for which he was responsible. There, he would gather intelligence about suspected collaborators, potential moral violations, and IDF activity. For instance, 'Abed al-Naji Rantisi was in charge of Ul Street in the Shaikh Radwan district of Gaza City. Every two weeks, he wrote and submitted reports to Mahmud Abu Wasfa, his neighborhood commander; Abu Wasfa would read and annotate these reports, then compile all the neighborhood reports he received into a single summary document. He would then submit the latter document to the commander of the northern part of the Gaza Strip, who in turn passed it along to Sufian Abu Samara, the head of Hamas’s security apparatus. Abu Samara would bring these summaries to the “Committee of Three,” which alongside Abu Samara included Muhammad Habub, head of the security apparatus in the southern part of Gaza City, and Ramadan Yazuri, regional commander for the southern Gaza Strip. The committee would discuss the reports and translate them into operational instructions, such as assaulting, threatening, or interrogating suspected collaborators or moral transgressors.[[257]](#footnote-257)

In principle, in keeping with the division of responsibility that characterized Hamas operations at this time, directives were transferred to the executive arm for implementation. However, in practice, this division of responsibility was not maintained. This is evident from the activity of the security apparatus in the northern Gaza Strip, and that of Alaa' Muhammad al-A'rij, its head from August 1990 to January 1991. The area overseen by al-A'rij was likewise divided neatly into sub-sectors, but the instruction to operatives was not merely to gather intelligence; rather, it was to carry out interrogations of collaboration suspects and morality offenders themselves.[[258]](#footnote-258)’It must be noted that Hamas’s action against collaborators during the First Intifada did not take place in a vacuum. In those years, an internal war raged within Palestinian society, in which the elimination of suspected collaborators by multiple factions became an ever-growing phenomenon in the Gaza Strip. In 1988, the numbers were still relatively small, with only a handful of victims; by 1989, the number was about 90, and in 1990 about 110.[[259]](#footnote-259) Palestinian sources claimed that about 750 individuals were killed as suspected collaborators over the course of the Intifada, although it was obvious that at least 80 percent of them had never met a member of the Shin Bet in their lives.[[260]](#footnote-260) At that time, the concept of “collaborator” had taken on many meanings, and did not exclusively indicate someone who passed on intelligence or security information to Israel.[[261]](#footnote-261) Nonetheless, in some cases, actual collaborators – people who were in some way or another Israeli agents – were in fact identified and killed. For example, in 1988, Hamas operatives abducted a man suspected of collaborating with the Shin Bet. He was beaten and tortured until he lost consciousness. The Hamas operatives in charge mistook him for dead and got rid of the body; a passerby found him and his life was saved. The man had indeed been giving intelligence to Shin Bet agents for several years before his abduction.[[262]](#footnote-262)

Once the 'Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades were founded in the early 1990s, they joined Hamas’s activities against collaboration suspects. Some even argue that the new group simply replaced al-Majd, which in turn continued to operate within Hamas as the organization’s General Security apparatus. Before late 1991, the Brigades carried out close to 20 killings of this type.[[263]](#footnote-263) In early 1992, a cell under the command of Yahiya 'Aiyyash and other Hamas operatives convened a local security conference in Kufr Qarawat Bani Hassan in the Nablus region of the West Bank; the conference would focus primarily on punishing collaborators with Israel. Indeed, at the conference, the cell resolved to abduct and interrogate an individual suspected of significant collaboration. The cell split up into several task forces: one to deal with surveillance, one to perform the actual abduction, and one to find an appropriate hiding place and interrogate the suspect. The plan was put into practice, and the suspect was brought to a waiting car outside the village near an observation point where it was possible to make sure the road was clear. He was taken outside the village, on the assumption that his family would go looking for him. The cell interrogated the suspected collaborator for three days and ultimately elicited a confession of his activity with Israel; they continued to conduct similar missions for over a year.[[264]](#footnote-264) In drawing conclusions from the activity, Jabarin notes that one of the challenges in missions of this kind is the need to carry out forward observation, surveillance, and intelligence gathering. He also notes that surveillance and patrols must be deployed in order to avoid military roadblocks and checkpoints when taking the suspect to the interrogation spot.[[265]](#footnote-265)

In its early years, Hamas maintained an important center in the United States after Israeli activity managed to cause significant damage to the organization. The overseas headquarters was also informed of suspected collaborators. For example, a 1993 report submitted by a Hamas commander in the Gaza Strip to Muhammad Sallah (Abu Ahmad), an envoy from the United States, stated that the Strip was rife with collaborators, and that Hamas was taking action against them: interrogating the suspects, eliciting videotaped confessions, and executing them. The report also stated that Hamas was reining in these executions so as not to harm the struggle for the return of those expelled to Marj al-Zuhour.[[266]](#footnote-266)

Even after the First Intifada and the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, Hamas sustained its activities against suspected collaborators. After the Oslo Accords, there were many internecine murders in Palestinian society, not only over political rivalry, but as the result of business conflicts, drug and weapons deals, protection payments, and so on. Some voices within Palestinian society called for an end to these killings. One such individual was Taufiq Abu Hosa, a leader of the Intifada from Fatah. In response to his plea to cease the slaughter, members of the 'Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades murdered two suspects just outside Hosa’s front door.[[267]](#footnote-267) In February 1994, a young Israeli man from Herzliya named Shai Shuker was murdered. An investigation by the Israeli security services led to the arrest of the murderer, Suliman Mahmud. Mahmud’s interrogation revealed that he had been a collaborator with Israel in the past. He had then expressed a desire to join Hamas; in order to cleanse himself of the stain of collaboration with Israel, he was told by a Hamas operative from Gaza that he had to carry out an attack against Jews. He drove to Tira, met Shuker, who was a drug dealer, and strangled him to death.[[268]](#footnote-268)

In May 1994, after Hamas murdered two suspected collaborators in Gaza, members of the Palestinian Authority, including Gen. Nasser Yusuf, the commander of the Palestinian police force, addressed Hamas, asking the organization to put an end to independent executions and instead hand the suspect over to the PA. The general even met with Shaikh Ahmad Bakr, a Hamas member, and pled with him, saying that Hamas’s actions were not in line with the teachings of Islam; Hamas had to stop what it was doing and let the Palestinian police handle suspects through an organized legal process. In response to Gen. Yusuf, Hamas distributed a proclamation on May 29, 1994, that stated: “The problem of the collaborators still exists, and their actions are still a danger. Hamas is leaving the handling of them to the Palestinian police and calls on its police officers to pursue collaborators day and night.”[[269]](#footnote-269) However, it seems that Hamas did not operate according to this statement in practice. An example of Hamas’s continued activity against collaborators even after the establishment of the PA is the case of Yusuf Kenen, who was recruited in 1996 to Hamas’s security apparatus in the Gaza Strip. One of his tasks was to write reports about suspected collaborators and submit these reports to his handlers.[[270]](#footnote-270)

The initiatives by Hamas’s security apparatus against suspected collaborators extended even to the insides of various Israeli prisons where organization members were serving time. The security apparatus’s operatives in prison gathered intelligence and surveilled Hamas members inside the prisons, using sources planted among the inmates. The information they gathered was covertly documented by al-Majd members using code words. They interrogated suspected collaborators among the inmates, both identifying those who were suspected of collaboration during their prison term and “settling scores” with those who had worked for Israel before their arrest; their interrogations made use of violence and horrific methods of torture. The organization’s operating assumption was that there were many spies within its ranks providing information to Israel – information that was then used to imprison hundreds of Hamas operatives and thwart attacks on Israel. Between 1993 and 1996, Hamas interrogated some 150 suspects sitting in Israeli prisons; many were accused despite their innocence. Of these 150, al-Majd killed 16. This operation, including much of the associated torture, continued into the late 1990s, when Maher Odeh was in charge of Hamas’s security wing in the prisons.[[271]](#footnote-271)

Hamas violence towards suspected collaborators continued into the 2000s, both in the Gaza Strip and West Bank and in the prisons. For example, Sallah Shaikh joined a Hamas cell in 2002 and participated in violent actions such as throwing Molotov cocktails. In 2004, his cell suspected a man from their area of collaboration with Israel, and subsequently attacked and beat him.[[272]](#footnote-272) With regard to activity in prison, a senior Hamas operative, whose name remains classified, was in charge of Hamas security in the prison where he was serving his sentence; he interrogated suspected collaborators within the prison walls. His tenure in this role began in 2002 and continued for several years.[[273]](#footnote-273)

With Hamas’s institutionalization in the mid-2000s, the organization’s counterintelligence activities against the HUMINT threat took on a more official character. When Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, it also assumed control of the prisons. This included Gaza Prison, which held suspected collaborators with Israel arrested by the PA’s security apparatus, some of whom were on death row awaiting execution. In the chaos of the upheaval, the prisoners escaped; Hamas demanded that they had to return at once. Those who did not were brought back by force, and Hamas reconsidered the sentences they had received in the past – this time according to rules of jurisprudence based mostly on Islamic religious law (’hari'a). The man charged with running the prison on behalf of Hamas was Hassan al-Gamasi, who had himself been sentenced to more than 200 years in prison for killing suspected collaborators during the First Intifada, and who had been released in the 1990s as part of the Oslo Accords.[[274]](#footnote-274)

Well before Hamas’s seizure of the Strip, Hamas operatives began to understand the importance of agents’ activity in real time – in combat operations and targeted assassinations. According to Mahmud al-Zahar, a senior figure in Hamas, Hamas came to realize that the assassination of Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi was the result of a report by a collaborator who witnessed Rantisi move from car to car. This information was transmitted to spy planes flying above Gaza, and from there to planes that carried out the attack.[[275]](#footnote-275) When Hamas took control of the Strip, it was able to combat this threat more effectively. For example, in a preparatory drill for an Israeli army incursion into the Gaza Strip in 2007, Hamas’s military wing also drilled a scenario in which a car was identified as containing someone suspected of collaboration with Israel during combat, and practiced handling such a case.[[276]](#footnote-276)

One of the systems established by Hamas in the Gaza Strip in approximately 2007 was its Internal Security Force (ISF), which has since led the fight against suspected collaborators at the behest of the Interior Ministry. In early 2009, immediately after Operation Cast Lead, Hamas commenced an intensive campaign to identify agents for Israel who had been active during the fighting. It arrested people that it claimed were members of a network operated by the PA security apparatus in the Gaza Strip to gather information on Hamas that would also be useful to Israel. Among those present at the announcement of the arrests was Abu Abdullah, head of the Data Analysis Administration of the ISF. This declaration may indicate how concerns about collaboration may also serve political needs, as it came just before the start of the intra-Palestinian reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah in Cairo. Hamas was subsequently accused of fabricating these claims in order to score points before the negotiations.[[277]](#footnote-277)

In April 2009, the Hamas government was accused of putting more than 30 political opponents to death. In response, then-Hamas spokesman Ayman Tah claimed that these were people who had been interrogated and sentenced by law for their crimes; some had collaborated with Israel.[[278]](#footnote-278) In September 2010, the Gaza Strip Interior Ministry announced that it had managed to identify and arrest two individuals who had collaborated with Israel. At a press conference held by the Hamas government, the confessions of the two supposed collaborators were presented to the public. On this same occasion, a senior Interior Ministry official, Abu Abdullah Lafi, also displayed technological devices and weapons provided by Israel to the collaborators to carry out their missions.[[279]](#footnote-279) Another example occurred in July 2020. According to reports, a senior Hamas operative who had been in contact with Israel fled to Israel by sea. Consequently, Hamas’s security apparatus carried out a wave of arrests in the Gaza Strip. One detainee was Muhammad 'Amar Abu Ajwa, a Hamas operative who, according to the claim, had worked for Israeli intelligence for about a decade. Abu Ajwa was a senior figure in Hamas’s security system and was in charge of the organization’s internal communications network.[[280]](#footnote-280)

In addition to its operations against collaborators, Hamas’s Interior Ministry ran a well-oiled propaganda machine exposing Israel’s modus operandi to the public at large. In May 2010, Hamas’s al-Aqsa TV channel broadcast a feature covering the ways in which Israel’s intelligence tries to recruit young Palestinians. In the piece, Interior Ministry spokesman 'Ihab al-'Asin discusses ways to confront the phenomenon.[[281]](#footnote-281) Another example is a 45-minute film produced by Hamas and aired on the al-Aqsa channel in September 2012. Styled as a documentary, the movie aims to discourage collaboration and persuade those already caught in its grasp (“sunk in the mud,” as the program would have it) to repent and return to the bosom of the Palestinian people. The movie exposes the methods used by Israeli intelligence to recruit and operate agents. For example, it shows how Israel provides financial incentives and work permits in exchange for collaboration, or high-quality medical care for the agent or family members in exchange for aid in intelligence. The film also presents firsthand testimony by Israeli agents who had been caught, as well as documentation of conversations between Israeli handlers and Gaza Strip residents. At the end, the film calls on the citizens of the Gaza Strip to avoid cooperation with Israel; those already in contact with Israel are called on once again to reconsider.[[282]](#footnote-282)

In tandem with the institutionalized activities of Hamas’s apparatus in Gaza against suspected collaborators, a more decentralized form of the same activity also continued in the West Bank. For example, in 2009, Nur al-Din Hamdan, a Hamas operative from Bethlehem, formed a fireteam to carry out attacks against Israel. As its first action, it chose to target a certain suspected collaborator by the name of Sallah. The fireteam surveilled Sallah, in part through Jerusalem residents such as Hussain Abu Tir, and gathered information about him. Eventually, during the operation, in late 2009, when the fireteam members had already closed in on Sallah and were only a few feet away from him, Sallah was warned and fled.[[283]](#footnote-283)

***Compartmentalization, Screening, and Document Security***

Because Hamas was well aware of the intensive HUMINT activity conducted by Israel in its midst, it constantly screened its personnel and worked to maintain strict compartmentalization. From their inception, Islamic movements in Palestinian society, first and foremost Hamas, consisted of operatives whose motivation to work for them differed from the well-known national movements, especially Fatah. While the national movements were comprised of men looking for material gain, among other inducements, the Islamic movements drew men with a deep-seated religious ideology; this had a direct effect on the organization’s ability to run a secret, compartmentalized organization with strong internal discipline.[[284]](#footnote-284)

In the 1980s and 1990s, Hamas’s recruitment methods included significant field security procedures. First, there was the question of selecting candidates – primarily from the educational institutions run by the organization, from families whose members had been harmed by the IDF, and from competing organizations such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Throughout the recruitment and training process, the candidates came under the strict scrutiny of the movement’s security apparatus. When they attended the cells’ weekly gatherings, there was an insistence on secrecy, manifested in the following ways: The missions were compartmentalized, i.e., no cell member knew about the missions of the other members; the meeting place was entered one by one, not in groups; and every team member had to make sure that he was not under surveillance. At the site of the meeting, all windows and shutters would be closed, and at the end of the meeting, participants left one by one and went in different directions.[[285]](#footnote-285) One of the reasons that Hamas did not join the united national headquarters during the First Intifada was the fact that the constituting organizations were large, making them easier for Israel to penetrate than Hamas. In the past, when Hamas had worked hand in hand with Fatah, many of its members were arrested. By contrast, Hamas allowed into its ranks only personnel who had passed a thorough screening process, including an in-depth assessment and ongoing surveillance.[[286]](#footnote-286)

As noted, after Israel arrested numerous Hamas operatives in 1988, Hamas organized itself anew. Shaikh Yassin, who feared that detainees would provide information about movement members and that Israeli intelligence operatives had been planted within the organization, rearranged and restaffed the various branches of the movement. The rules of compartmentalization continued to be very clear and very strict. Cells’ members knew only one another; all communication between cells was conducted by way of the security division’s staff, who served as couriers transmitting dispatches. Furthermore, dispatches were coded with letters indicating the cells and numbers indicating the numbers of cell members. In addition, the arrest of Khaled al-Hindi in November 1988 led to a large-scale change in Hamas’s procedure for dead drops. Hamas constructed a secret hiding place at Shaikh Radjwan’s mosque in the Gaza Strip to host an archive that would store all the information gathered by the members of the security division. In its next reorganization in September 1989, following another round of arrests, Hamas went to even greater lengths of compartmentalization, and the division of roles became much more specific. A round of arrests in late 1990 led the external leadership to rebuild the organization so that there would be no contact between the various regions. Each region would contact the external leadership directly to prevent any possibility of contact between one region and the next, which might lead to the transmission of information to Israel upon operatives’ arrest. Furthermore, the recruitment process became covert, using codes left at dead drops. Moreover, once clerics identified potential operatives for *istish’had* activities, they would be instructed to keep strictly to themselves and refrain from sharing the fact of their recruitment even with family members.[[287]](#footnote-287)

The expulsion of Hamas operatives to Marj al-Zuhour, Lebanon, in December 1992 led to an increase in the number of young men asking to enlist with Hamas. At that time, five men would vie for every opening. Hamas operated an extremely strict selection procedure that included a total ban on any operative with an arrest in his past and whose activity was known to Israel. In 1‘93, 'Izz a-Din al-Qassam members operated in small groups with very few participants and strict compartmentalization. Any exposure to Israeli security forces led to heightened security and increased separation between operatives.[[288]](#footnote-288) In April 1993, Maj. Gen. Uri Sagi, then head of IDF Military Intelligence, described the modus operandi:

They [Hamas] had a high level of compartmentalization. The ground here in Israel is divided into four or five headquarters that operate sub-organizations and cells. At the end of the chain, there’s one individual operating an armed team. He barely knows anyone else in the organization. There’s a very complex network of operators, sub-operators, fighters, and so on.[[289]](#footnote-289)

In September 1998, the Shin Bet identified brothers 'Adel and 'Imad 'Awadallah as key Hamas operatives in the West Bank. 'Adel headed the organization’s military wing in Jerusalem, and together, the brothers ran a large terrorist infrastructure. After the Shin Bet tracked down and killed the brothers, findings discovered in their hiding place showed that they had run a large clandestine network for the manufacture of weapons used in attacks. Their crowning achievement was to have been the simultaneous detonation of five car bombs in major Israeli cities. An archive of the infrastructure’s activity, located by the Shin Bet, shows that contact among the members, some of whom were active during their jail terms in Israel’s Ashkelon Prison, was carried out via tiny letters hidden in the intimate orifices of couriers who carried them throughout the West Bank and in and out of prison. The infrastructure was also highly compartmentalized; operatives did not know one another or other commanders in the organization. In practice, only 'Adel himself knew the whole picture. Moreover, members of the infrastructure, including ‘the 'Awadallah brothers, hid only in secure apartments. 'Adel himself would go over the signed rental agreements with the owners to make sure that nothing in the contract identified his men. This incident reflects the high level of secrecy adopted by some Hamas personnel. The phenomenon was also noted by then-Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, who stated to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee: “Only now do we understand that we were aware of just 40 percent of the reach of Hamas’s infrastructure.”[[290]](#footnote-290)

In the 2000s, some Hamas cells in the West Bank also maintained strict compartmentalization, and their members would only meet in emergencies. They left their homes only rarely, and when they did so, it was for brief sojourns and directly related to their missions.[[291]](#footnote-291) In this period, Hamas continued to ensure that its activities remained confidential and were exposed only on a need-to-know basis. For example, while coordinating his cell in March 2002, Muhammad 'Arman and his team members decided that a certain operative for an attack would be identified in a meeting at the mosque. The operative would wear clothing that distinguished him; 'Arman would ask him a prearranged question (“Where is the Education and Culture Ministry?”) and would wait for the correct answer (“In Bir Zeit.”) before proceeding.[[292]](#footnote-292)

Frequent clashes with Israel’s security forces also meant that Hamas had to prevent its documents from falling into Israeli hands, and had to maintain compartmentalization and security procedures also with regard to documents. In many cases, the organization failed in this mission, and entire archives would be intercepted by Israel. By the 1990s, however, documents were successfully destroyed in some cases. For example, an East Jerusalem cell headed by Ibrahim 'Abasi, which operated from 1997–1998 on the basis of directives from Hamas operatives held in Israeli prisons, was highly conscious of security. For example, the sides communicated through letters. Hamas operatives in prison would write letters and wrap them in plastic to look like candies, so that it would be possible to swallow them if necessary. For the most part, the operatives used code words whose meaning was known only to the two sides. Money was also transferred clandestinely using dead drops. On one occasion, a cell leader received a letter that instructed him to go to the al-Aqsa mosque, go to the cupboard where the congregants placed their shoes, and take the bag that rested on top of the cupboard. The bag was filled with a plant used to make herbal tea; the money was concealed inside. Further evidence for the high awareness of security on the part of Hamas’s infrastructure is the fact that when 'Abasi saw soldiers going past his house just before his arrest, he burned the letters containing the information gathered, as he feared they might be found in his possession were his house to be searched.[[293]](#footnote-293)

In 2008, an internal publication of the Hamas military wing devoted an entire chapter to securing the organization’s documents of every type: papers, files, books, photographs, maps, disks, diskettes, videotapes, and so on. Operatives were provided with procedures for the proper handling of documents, from preparation to storage. For the preparation stage, operatives were told to create documents in a discreet location that would neither attract attention nor expose the documents’ contents. Operatives were further warned not to write documents on soft or delicate surfaces that might absorb pen impressions and thus reveal the contents. References to addressees and entities mentioned in the documents had to be made allusively and in code. All drafts and documents not in use had to be destroyed by various means – burning and flushing the ashes down the toilet, shredding and soaking the strips, and so forth. Operatives were asked to make note of devices that stored a copy of the written or photographed document, such as fax machines and printers; they were also instructed to destroy the film reels or erase the memory of those machines, as well as to remove identifying markers, such as fingerprints and ink type, so that these markers could not be used to trace them.[[294]](#footnote-294)

Before distributing any document, operatives had to title it with its correct level of classification: Top Secret, Secret, Confidential, Sensitive, and Unclassified.[[295]](#footnote-295) Similarly, with regard to computer use, operatives were instructed to delete any document that was no longer necessary, and to use passwords and codes when accessing their computers. Physical documents were to be stored in secure locations that were known only to a few operatives and that could be wiped clean when necessary. Operatives were instructed to take inventory and make regular audits to ensure all documents were there; to avoid leaving documents in cars or other locations visible to others; to check their pockets to make sure that they were not accidentally carrying documents; to abstain from reading documents not immediately relevant to them; to keep a log of everyone who had seen sensitive documents; and to make a plan in advance for destroying the documents or removing classified elements from the documents in an emergency.[[296]](#footnote-296) Warnings against the circulation of documents beyond their distribution list can be found in Hamas military texts from 2013. Instruction manuals for anti-tank weapons and for snipers, which contain the combat doctrine of 'Izz a-Din al-Qassam in these areas, are inscribed with the following comment: “Esteemed brothers-in-arms will refrain from photocopying, publishing, and printing this manual without the express permission of the Instruction and Training Department.”[[297]](#footnote-297)

***Stemming the Flow of Information from Operatives Detained by Israel***

Hamas also tried to block Israeli access to intelligence derived from human sources (HUMINT) by attempting to prevent information leaks by operatives arrested and interrogated by Israel. In September 1988, using funds raised in the United States, Hamas representatives in Cyprus printed a 16-page instruction manual entitled “The Mujahid Under Interrogations and Torture.” The booklet explains to operatives how Israel makes use of arrests to extract significant intelligence using various means, including physical force. Operatives are told in no uncertain terms that *jihad* does not end with one’s arrest, but continues into the interrogation room; they are informed of the dangers of giving up information on Hamas activities and fighters, as well as the benefit this may provide to Israel. With the help of numerous citations from the Quran and other Islamic literature, the manual stresses the responsibility of every operative to withstand torture and the rich rewards of keeping silent.[[298]](#footnote-298)

Since the organization’s inception and into the 1990s, Hamas’s front in the United States was the Islamic Center for Research and Studies. In addition to gathering OSINT,[[299]](#footnote-299) the center collected information that included indictments and confessions of Hamas operatives arrested by Israel, submitted by attorneys retained to defend Hamas suspects. Examining these documents, the center assessed the damage wrought by revelations about other operatives, methods of action and communication, and money transfers. Hamas derived lessons from this data that had a practical impact on all the changes made to the organization’s operations from 1989 onward. In March 1991, members of Hamas’s political committee met at a Ramada Inn in Kansas City. The meeting was run by Muhammad Sallah and featured Najib al-'Aush, a Palestinian MA student and longtime resident of the United States. During the meeting, al-'Aush lectured the other attendees on a range of topics, including the interrogation practices of Israel’s intelligence.[[300]](#footnote-300)

At that time, Hamas undertook a damage assessment regarding information that operatives might have relinquished during interrogations in Israel. In the 1990s, documents detailing confessions made by organization members to the Israeli authorities and information on how these confessions were extracted were discovered in the possession of 'Abed al-Halim Ashkar, a Hamas operative in the United States. Hamas had collected these documents in order to find out what Israel had learned about Hamas; this would almost certainly help the organization to change its modus operandi and implement future safeguards to increase the odds of missions’ success and decrease the odds of arrest.[[301]](#footnote-301)

Hamas’s training and instruction programs also emphasized this topic. A 2008 publication of the military wing, aimed at its operatives, stressed that many of Israel’s successes had resulted from confessions during operatives’ interrogations. The publication pointed out that even if an operative confesses, he will not admit it to his commander, so the organization does not know it needs to change its conduct. Therefore, operatives must do everything they can not to be arrested; if they are arrested, they must behave according to the specified security procedures.[[302]](#footnote-302) In 2008, Hitham Quran established an *'usrah*, a study group for Islamic materials, in al-Birah. The aim of the '*usrah* was to strengthen religious sentiment and support for Hamas in the region. Its curriculum, which focused on religious studies and espoused a worldview aligned with Hamas’s stances, also covered the Shin Bet’s interrogation practices.[[303]](#footnote-303) An additional example is the Shabab al-Aqsa, Hamas’s extension on the Temple Mount. Its objective was to carry out activities on behalf of Hamas to strengthen Palestinian control, whether by propaganda or by violence. Between 2014 and 2016, operatives received training on security arrests and the Shin Bet’s methods of interrogation, as well as recommended practices in case of arrest.[[304]](#footnote-304)

Hamas operatives were also briefed on the topic as part of their training in preparation for attacks. Ramiz Abu Salim, the suicide attacker who carried out the bombing of Café Hillel in Jerusalem in September 2003, underwent training before the bombing in which he received material on Shin Bet interrogations, probably in the event that he was caught.[[305]](#footnote-305) In an additional example, after Zi'ad 'Awar and his son 'Izz a-Din al-Qassam successfully conducted an attack together in April 2014, Zi'ad instructed his son and partner on how to face interrogation by Israel’s security forces, based on the former’s own personal experience.[[306]](#footnote-306)

While many operatives nevertheless supplied high-value intelligence to Israel’s security forces, the tools Hamas provided its fighters to withstand interrogations in Israel did bear fruit in some cases. In 1995, Israeli security forces claimed that it had become extremely difficult to extract high-quality information about Hamas. Interrogations had become the primary channel of information, and they too had been rendered practically useless – “The terrorists have learned. They’re giving up information only after prolonged interrogation if at all, when the information they give is no longer relevant.”[[307]](#footnote-307) A more recent example is the arrest of an operative connected to the planning of the Gilad Shalit abduction in June 2006 only a few days before the mission. The operative managed to withstand the interrogation long enough that the information he ultimately gave was no longer of any use in preventing the abduction, which was already underway.[[308]](#footnote-308)

**Hamas’s Battle against the SIGINT Threat**

Since its inception, Hamas has been aware of the risks inherent in the use of telecommunications. The organization’s first line of defense was to find indirect ways for operatives to stay in touch, mainly in the form of written dispatches. For example, Mazin Muhammad 'Alian, a resident of the Gaza Strip, enlisted in Hamas in 1989. From then on, he contributed to the organization in various ways. He opened his house to members of the military wing, including Muhammad Daif, then its head in the Gaza Strip. Because he held an Israeli work permit, the organization used him to transmit a secret dispatch from a Hamas operative in Israel to the Gaza Strip. The dispatch was forwarded to Daif, who instructed 'Alian not to give it to anyone else and to destroy all copies.[[309]](#footnote-309) Nishat 'Aiyyash served as a Hamas operative starting in 1988; his role was also to carry dispatches. He eventually traveled to Lebanon for weapons training with Hizballah, and in 1995, when he returned, he brought a dispatch for Hamas operatives that was transmitted in 1996.[[310]](#footnote-310)

After the deportation of many Hamas operatives in late 1992, Hamas personnel in the United States smuggled equipment, money, and operational directives to the West Bank to rebuild the movement. In order to achieve this objective, they selected operatives who held U.S. passports; who were, as far as they could tell, not known to Israeli intelligence; and who had relatives in the West Bank, so that they could conceivably use a visit to family as the cover story for their arrival.[[311]](#footnote-311) Another method for the secure transmission of information by Hamas is evident from the following example. In the 1990s, in order to maintain contact between the West Bank and Syria, Hamas operatives would write messages on very thin paper, roll the messages up, and insert them into medical capsules or plastic cord. The courier would swallow the capsule before crossing the border, then vomit it up on the other side. Alternately, the message would be concealed inside the courier’s shoe.[[312]](#footnote-312) Either way, the courier himself remained ignorant of the message’s content and was thus effectively compartmentalized.

In 1995, Zi'ad Hamad, a Hamas operative from the village of Silwad, traveled from Israel to the United States via Jordan. During this journey, he carried a message from Ibrahim Hamad, another Hamas operative, to a Hamas member in Jordan, 'Abed al-Ghfur al-'Ajuri. The meeting with al-'Ajuri was arranged by means of code words received by Ziyad from Ibrahim.[[313]](#footnote-313) Likewise, in 1999, Ibrahim Zaharan, a resident of Dir Abu Mashal, was asked by 'Udeh Zaharan, an operative from Hamas’s Jordanian headquarters, to help the Jordanian headquarters to transmit a message from a Hamas operative in the West Bank. Zaharan was provided with a code word to identify himself to Hamas agents and receive the cue to embark on his mission. The message itself was rolled up and concealed inside a can of olives.[[314]](#footnote-314)

This sort of activity continued into the 2000s and after Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip. In the early 2000s, Maher Hussni 'Ali Shafi ran a dead drop for Hamas, which he used to help transmit dispatches among organization members.[[315]](#footnote-315) In 2008, Mahmud Nagar served as a courier in the engineering department of Hamas’s military wing to pass information between fireteams, apparently in an attempt to avoid wireless communications.[[316]](#footnote-316) In March 2012, Musa Sarur worked as a courier, tasked with moving memory sticks from Hamas’s Ramallah headquarters to the organization’s Jordanian headquarters. To this end, his handlers in Ramallah equipped him with a dedicated cell phone for calling Hamas operatives in Jordan.[[317]](#footnote-317) Bushra Tawil, who was eligible for money from Hamas because of her parents’ imprisonment, was in contact with Hamas to help move funds from Jordan. As part of this mission, she collected lists of other individuals eligible for financial assistance, which she sent by encoded email and in a written missive to the Hamas operatives with whom she was in contact.[[318]](#footnote-318)

Another method to circumvent the risk of interception was conversation in code. In the early 1990s, Hamas’s headquarters in the United States made use of this strategy: Phone calls between Hamas operatives (with the participation of 'Abed al-Halim Ashkar) in the United States, and between the United States and other locations worldwide, were conducted in code.[[319]](#footnote-319) In early 1993, when Hamas emissaries from the United States came to the West Bank, written instructions for paying operatives were encoded using the 1+X method (the numeral 2 was written instead of the numeral 1, the numeral 3 was written instead of the numeral 2, etc.) so that instructions intercepted by Israeli intelligence would not identify the operatives.[[320]](#footnote-320)

Code names were also used in letters from inside Israeli prisons to Hamas operatives at large. Hamas operative 'Ali Sa'id, imprisoned in the Ramon facility in 2008, aimed to carry out an attack in Israel. He contacted fellow inmate Mandhar al-Ja'bah, knowing that the latter was in contact with operatives in the Gaza Strip. They agreed that when al-Ja'bah was released, he would aid in the execution of the attack. In order to maintain communication, in August 2’09 Sa'id asked al-Ja'bah to send a letter to a Hamas operative he knew; the letter would contain information necessary for the attack, which was planned for December 14, the anniversary of Hamas’s founding. The two agreed on code names for further contact. Later, Sa'id sent encoded letters to other Hamas personnel containing additional code words relating to the operation. Sa'id was also given phone numbers in encoded form to contact Hamas operatives. In one incident, notes were smuggled to him in a bag of potato chips given to him by his wife.[[321]](#footnote-321)

Ahmad al-Ja'bari is an example of a senior Hamas member who maintained strict secrecy for years following the attempt on his life in 2004. He rarely went out, and then only with multiple bodyguards; the bodyguards would sometimes go out without him to confuse observers. He made a point never to carry a mobile device on his person, and he used couriers to pass on commands and instructions, until, on the eve of Operation Pillar of Defense, he made a fatal error that cost him his life.[[322]](#footnote-322)

From the establishment of its military wing, Hamas began to use the systematic tables of code words known as *lum'i*. Thus, for example, in 2007, Tala't Maruf, the Hamas forward observer from Bait Lahiya mentioned in Chapter 1, was exposed to a communications instruction document for the *ribat*'s activities and forward observation activities. The document specified the code names of the posts used over com devices, as well as passwords for passing on reports, in a booklet called *Kharitat lum'i*.[[323]](#footnote-323) Documentation from 2009 of a Hamas forward observation team also demonstrates the use of *lum'i* tables. The forward observer reports that “there’s a 2/2 *lumi* there and it’s 1/1 and in rapid motion.” The numbers used here reflect the use of the code table familiar to forward observers and the command rooms, adopted in case Israel is listening in on the reports. From the context, one can assume that 2/2 refers to some type of vehicle or force identified by the forward observer, and that 1/1 refers to some description of the object identified or action carried out.[[324]](#footnote-324)

An example of Hamas' code document from 2009 is instructive in terms of the manner of use and content of *lum'i* tables. This *lum'i* table belongs to a regiment named for the *shahid* Nadal Nasser; based on the table’s content, the regiment appears to be part of the northern Gaza Strip brigade, responsible for the area around the Erez Crossing. The uppermost table on the page features columns and rows of words that may be combined to create coded messages. Possible messages include reports on raising the alert status to 1, 2, or 3; reports on Hamas rocket fire or the entrance of IDF special forces; updates on soldier abduction; tunnel use; detonating various explosive devices; setting ambushes; and reports on the presence of a suspicious vehicle. Furthermore, there are codes for requests, such as dispatching an ambulance or sending in the media and propaganda apparatus (presumably to document an incident). The second table on the page has names of places controlled by the regiment, including locations on the Israeli side of the border, such as the Erez post, and locations within the Gaza Strip, such as homes and lands belonging to Gaza residents.[[325]](#footnote-325)

In the West Bank, too, Hamas operatives continued to use code as a way to mitigate the risk of Israeli interception. For instance, a fireteam led by Rajib 'Ilawiyah, who carried out the attack in Bait Furik in October 2015 in which an Israeli couple was killed in front of their children, made plans to abduct an Israeli citizen. To this end, the fireteam arranged for the help of a local doctor; were someone to be hurt during the abduction, whether one of the attackers or the victim, they would alert the doctor using code words that would indicate a need for medical help, and he would come to the site.[[326]](#footnote-326)

Hamas upheld security protocols to reduce the risk of Israeli surveillance of operatives’ devices. Already in the 1990s, Hamas operatives, including senior figures, would use cheap burner phones only one time, so that Israeli intelligence would be unable to link a specific phone with terrorist activities. They worried that their homes were bugged, and they trained their families to take security precautions in order to safeguard against wiretapping.[[327]](#footnote-327) As noted in Chapter 2, Nizmi Hussein, then a student in Romania, was recruited to Hamas in the early 1990s. He was sent to Turkey for training in 1994; there, he was instructed to conceal his real identity and refrain from revealing any detail of his training. Later on, Hussein tried to recruit his friend 'Abd al-Islam Zidan to the organization. At the meeting in which Hussein reached out to Zidan, Hussein made sure to turn off his mobile phone and remove its battery. Throughout the time Hussein served as Zidan’s handler, the two were careful to uphold strict rules of secrecy. The two agreed to address one another only using nicknames. In the course of their training, both Hussein and Zidan received instruction on how to avoid detection, prepare dispatches, and encode information.[[328]](#footnote-328)

In the late 1990s, Ziad Hamad served as the go-between for Hamas operatives Ibrahim Hamad and Sharif Dudin. Dudin would contact the money exchange where Ziad worked and, using prearranged code words, give him a message to summon Ibrahim to the office, apparently on the understanding that it was a relatively clean phone line unlikely to be intercepted by the Israeli security services. In this way, they set up their meetings.[[329]](#footnote-329)

'Abas al-Said, a senior Hamas operative from Tul Karem, was among the ringleaders of the infamous 2002 attack on the Park Hotel in Netanya on the first night of Passover. The attack was preceded by a long period of preparations, including attempts to finalize the cell, attain explosives, and so on. Some of the members were arrested by Israeli forces in the summer of 2001, delaying the attack. Consequently, al-Said went underground, where he stayed in contact with other Hamas operatives using text messages and dispatches placed in dead drops. Just before the attack, al-Said, who was in charge of the operation, gave Fathi Hatib, the operative tasked with transporting the terrorist to the Park Hotel, a “clean” cell phone with which to submit real-time updates on the attack.[[330]](#footnote-330)

In 2009, Hamas senior operatives held extensive secret discussions on the establishment of a military academy, one of several lessons learned from Operation Cast Lead. The issue was never discussed over the phone. All talks were face-to-face, and the meetings prearranged. If any talk was to be done otherwise, it was via text message, using cell phones that were replaced every two or three months.[[331]](#footnote-331) In October 2009, Murad Kamil traveled to Turkey to meet with Hamas personnel for whom he was working in Israel. He was instructed to call three different phone numbers on three different days and identify himself by a code name. He was also instructed to buy a cell phone with a new SIM card to use only for making these calls.[[332]](#footnote-332) When Islam Mar'i, an Israeli citizen from Furadis who had been recruited to Hamas in 2010, met with Ahmad al-Huf, another Israeli whom Mar'i in turn wanted to recruit, Mar'i put his and al-Huf’s cell phones in a different vehicle to prevent interception.[[333]](#footnote-333)

In 2011, Jihad Atun, a Hamas operative from Sur Bahar, arranged to coordinate an attack in Jerusalem with a Gazan Hamas member named Saurhabil. Atun was told to buy a new SIM card and wait for encoded instructions by text message. In practice, the code word was sent in an email, appended to a seemingly innocent paragraph of text. All this was preliminary preparation for an attack that was never executed.[[334]](#footnote-334) In March 2013, Hamas sent Salim Sharkas to Jordan, ostensibly for a family event. His senders gave him an alias and instructions for contacting the relevant Hamas operatives in Jordan. He was told to buy a cell phone and SIM card that would be destroyed after the mission was completed, in order to generate a new means of communication between Hamas personnel in Jenin and their counterparts in Jordan. Sharkas returned to Jordan about two weeks later, at which point Hamas members gave him a dedicated email address for communications.[[335]](#footnote-335) In 2014, Hamas hired Ahmad Sa'idi, a Gazan fisherman, to smuggle goods necessary for the organization's operations. When they met, before they started to discuss anything sensitive, the Hamas operatives took Sa'idi’s Jawwal[[336]](#footnote-336) device away from him, turned it off, and removed its SIM card.[[337]](#footnote-337)

Hamas also endeavored to encode online activity conducted via email and smartphones. In the 2000s, at least some communication between Hamas and the Syrian headquarters took place online, though from internet cafés rather than from operatives’ homes, making it difficult to pin down the entity that was in touch with Damascus.[[338]](#footnote-338) In late 2010, Hamas operative Jihad Atun established contact with a fellow operative in Gaza in order to receive instructions for an attack. Some of their communication took place by means of encoded email.[[339]](#footnote-339) In 2017, “F. F.” was asked by his brother, a Gaza Strip resident, and his half-brother Muhammad, a Hamas operative, to buy a cell phone and SIM card and install an app for transmitting encoded messages. The device enabled F. F. to communicate with Muhammad in order to plan a revenge attack for the killing of a senior Gaza Strip Hamas leader, attributed to Israel.[[340]](#footnote-340)

In addition, Hamas remained aware of the danger of interception, and constantly worked to alert its operatives to the risk of using wireless devices. A 2005 Hamas publication first presents a schematic explanation of how the Jawwal network operates. Like every other mobile network, it relies on regional cells. When a device is in motion, it hops from one cell to another based on location. According to the schema, every time communication is bumped from one cell to another, considerable information about the device is transferred, including its type, date of manufacture, model, serial number, and card. This allows security agencies to make connections between different cards switched on the same device. Therefore, it is risky to maintain a card dedicated to covert operations in the same device that sometimes houses a card for civilian use. Additional data are transferred by means of reception sites, such as antennae and cell towers, near the user, making it is possible to identify the device’s location. For these reasons, Hamas recommended that its operatives get rid of their Jawwal devices. The same report states that when a device is off, it does not transmit data; therefore, there is no need to take the battery out of the device, as some operatives do. The writers of the report also point out the difference between non-content signals[[341]](#footnote-341) and conversation signals, and state that the device does not emit non-content signals when it is turned off.[[342]](#footnote-342)

The report also covers an incident in which Israel inserted listening devices in mobile devices belonging to 'Arafat and his aides; based on this episode, the reader is instructed neither to accept any phone as a gift nor to purchase one from anyone suspicious. Later on, the report cites example of words that, when uttered, mark the device as potentially suspicious and invite interception: *jihad*, *'amaliya*, *istishhad*, and names such as Daif (Muhammad Daif) or al-Rantisi ('Abed al-'Aziz al-Rantisi). Moreover, the report notes, surveillance can be implemented for a specific phone number, enabling the investigation of that phone number’s communications – all incoming and outgoing conversations. It therefore recommends that operatives use cards bought with no proofs of purchase and replace them from time to time.[[343]](#footnote-343)

An internal Hamas publication from October 2013 further exemplifies the organization’s attempts to raise its operatives’ awareness of the dangers inherent in cellphone use. In a section devoted to security, the publication introduces a film from the Israeli media (the now-defunct Channel 2) that presents advanced interception technologies. The film shows these technologies in use, presenting a demonstration staged at Bar-Ilan University; it describes the advanced capacities they provide for the interception of conversations, as well as the information that can be elicited from access to cell phones.[[344]](#footnote-344)

**Hamas’s Battle against the GEOINT Threat**

At least since the mid-2000s, Gaza Strip residents have easily been able to identify the sound of the UAVs the IDF operates to gather intelligence. The UAV’s nickname in the Gazan dialect – *al-z’nana* – is in fact derived from the buzzing sound it makes. The identification of UAVs was a sign that the IDF was gathering intelligence; louder buzzing indicated an increase in intelligence gathering.[[345]](#footnote-345) Thus, for example, In 2005, Haytham Hilas and his comrades went out to place an IED for detonation against an Israeli bus. When they arrived at the site, they noticed a Israeli UAV and turned back.[[346]](#footnote-346)

Hamas worked hard to raise its operatives’ awareness and familiarity with Israel’s GEOINT capabilities. Complete issues within a series of publications named *Know Your Enemy* were devoted to the topic. For example, the first issue of the series, released in July 2007, addresses the topic of “Intelligence [Gathering] by Skylite Airplane”; it provides background on the drones’ importance for Israel’s intelligence gathering purposes in general and against the Palestinian resistance in particular, as well as the enormous investment made by the Israeli military industry in their development. The issue then furnishes a great deal of information about a model known as Skylite, a tactical UAV for intelligence gathering manufactured by RAFAEL, including its important fuction on the battlefield, special features, and technical specs (weight, wingspan, speed, duration in the air, maximal range, etc.). Lastly, the issue details the means of observation installed on the drone, including its range, its resolution, its mechanism for retransmission, the range of its frequencies, and so on.[[347]](#footnote-347)

After the descriptive component, the issue features a piece delineating the UAVs’ weaknesses and possible strategies to combat them. According to the text, the UAVs’ main weaknesses are: difficulty in functioning under extreme weather conditions; difficulty in observation through thick smoke; inability to penetrate through both artificial and natural shelters; and difficulty distinguishing between objects/buildings and their shadows. The analysis recommends that, when operatives see a UAV of the type under review, they should hide under a shelter that blocks the vehicle’s field of vision, run towards a heavily built-up area where identification of individuals is difficult, avoid using wireless devices, move by motorized transport when the drone/UAV is overhead, and maintain prearranged shelters for operatives in potentially fraught areas or areas where IDF surveillance is likely.[[348]](#footnote-348)0

Another issue in the series is devoted to Israel’s intelligence gathering by means of thermal systems. Learning from its own past failures, as well as those of Hizballah in southern Lebanon, Hamas realized that a key feature of Israel’s ability to uncover planned operations is the use of cameras that detect activity from body heat. Neither hiding nor camouflage were of use to operatives, because they were not aware of the threat from thermal devices nor of ways to combat them. The issue contains a scholarly explanation of the scientific principles at the heart of thermal device technology. The organization’s operatives, who are the target audience for the publication, are asked to be patient and keep reading despite the scientific nature of the text because of the importance of understanding the threat. The text breaks down the operational rationale of thermal systems, based on the heat given off by the human body compared to its environment, with diagrams and charts to aid the explanation.[[349]](#footnote-349)

The publication goes on to describe in detail several thermal systems used by Israel and other armies, and breaks down the capabilities of each, so that operatives may get a sense of the nature of the threat to them from these systems. The text includes, among other details, the options for the systems’ placement in the battlefield, their common uses and range of detection, and a photo of the systems so that operatives can see what they actually look like. This is followed by a section that discusses ways to confound the systems. In terms of passive defense, Hamas recommends that operatives make sure they have thermal insulation, using animal- or plant-based materials as well as synthetics. The text also provides tips on the use of thermal insulation in various situations. Other recommendations on dealing with the threat are also provided; these are divided into simple versus more advanced methods. The most basic is burning tires to confuse the thermal systems’ sensors. Among the more advanced tactics are the use of wet netting that absorbs a significant amount of body heat, the use of ceramic insulation materials that trap heat inside buildings, painting houses with heat-insulating paint, and more. In conclusion, the text provides several examples of photographs produced by thermal systems in different environments, including a demonstration of how a thermal camera perceives a tank with and without damp netting, meant to show the effectiveness of insulation.[[350]](#footnote-350) This modus operandi was realized in a drill held by Hamas’s Burij regiment in 2007. The drill practiced the burning of tires to create a smoke screen, designed, according to the participants of the drill, to make it difficult for IDF patrol and observation planes to gather the necessary intelligence before an attack. This action was defined as a responsibility of Hamas’s aerial defense unit.[[351]](#footnote-351)

Another way that Hamas combats Israel’s GEOINT threat is camouflage. In a survey of the anti-aerial capabilities developed in the Gaza Strip after Hamas seized control in 2007, the publication shows Hamas operatives disrupting Israel’s ability to conduct visual surveillance of anti-aircraft cannons. The weapons are stationed on farmland and blend into the natural surroundings, concealed by green camouflage covers or green paint on the weapons themselves.[[352]](#footnote-352)

A 2007 feature about Hamas on the al-Aqsa channel showed the aerial threat posed by Israel to Hamas. In addition to helicopters and airplanes, the reportage also highlighted UAVs: “The weapon that has recently entered the line of confrontation with the Palestinians and has of late been upgraded even to carry missiles – that is, the drone the Palestinians calls the *z’nana* – is now enemy No. 1 of the resistance. It has been used to eliminate dozens of resistance fighters by bombing their cars or posts.”[[353]](#footnote-353) Likewise in 2007, in footage of a drill by Hamas’s military wing to prepare for a large-scale Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip, aircraft can suddenly be heard in the background. The cameras of the foreign reporter covering the drill caught operatives taking cover underneath camouflage out in the open.[[354]](#footnote-354)

The importance of camouflage was repeatedly emphasized for operatives on the ground. An instruction booklet for Hamas snipers stresses the need to place the sniper’s nest in a location for which camouflage has previously been planned. The quality of the camouflage is described as critical to the operation’s success. Among the camouflage tools presented to sniper fireteams are camouflage creams to rub onto one’s face and arms, camouflage nets (noted as a drawback is the fact that these nets decrease one’s field of vision), and a white cloth for the window that allows one to look out without being seen from the outside.[[355]](#footnote-355)

Another way to combat the Israeli GEOINT threat is the use of the subterranean level, hidden from the eyes of Israeli observation. We know of basic, undeveloped use of tunnels in the Palestinian theater, especially in the Gaza Strip along the Philadelphi Corridor (the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt), as early as the 1990s.[[356]](#footnote-356) In the 2000s, however, a significant development took place with regards to certain features of Hamas’s activity. In a 2006 interview, Muhammad Daif described tunnels as the next phase of warfare against Israel. According to Daif, Hamas had first concentrated on attacking collaborators; next, it turned its weapons to fire on Israeli army forces. Then came the IED stage, led in the 1990s by Yahiya 'Aiyyash, which continued into the early 2000s. The present, as Daif would have it, was the stage of the so-called “tunnel war”: an attempt to successfully penetrate Israeli settlements and harm residents, Border Patrol forces, IDF forces, and surveillance mechanisms along the border. In his opinion, this stage would be “high-quality war” that would result in significant damage to Israel.[[357]](#footnote-357)

Extensive use of tunnels for a variety of Hamas activities began in the early 2000s. In self-published documentation of subterranean activity from 2005, Hamas describes at length the transition that led to tunnel use. Hamas had identified the increased fortification of IDF posts, a phenomenon that was partly the result of the Second Intifada. In addition to physical defenses, such as electronic fences and concrete walls, Hamas was also aware of the intelligence gathering tools used by Israel, including surveillance cameras and aerial patrols, as an integral part of the protocol for guarding the posts. All these defensive means made it difficult for Hamas to attack the posts using above-ground means of approach. This led to the idea that, in order to thwart Israel’s ability to identify Hamas activity, the organization would have to take up subterranean premises.[[358]](#footnote-358) Interestingly, one reason for the expansion of the tunnels is the sandy soil of the Gaza Strip, which makes digging relatively easy.[[359]](#footnote-359)

The first subterranean attack occurred on September 26, 2001, aimed at the Tarmit army post located on the Philadelphi Corridor. Hamas operatives had tried to attack the post several times using different means, all above-ground. All of these attempted attacks failed, and the organization attributed the repeated failures to the defenses described above.[[360]](#footnote-360) Therefore, on the initiative of prominent operatives in Rafah such as Ra'id al-'Atar, who would later become the commander of Hamas’s military wing in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, Hamas began to dig a tunnel underneath the post. To avoid detection, the starting point of the work was an abandoned house nearby. There, too, activity was performed as clandestinely as possible, out of concern about potential collaborators in the area. According to Hamas, the successful detonation, which caused significant damage to the post and injured four soldiers, was the formative event that jumpstarted the tunnel war (*harb al-anfaq*) between the organization and Israel.[[361]](#footnote-361)

The success of the operation against the Tarmit post spurred further underground activity. In December 2003, the Chardon post, also on the Philadelphi Corridor, was attacked. Hamas operatives had dug 10 meters (~33 feet), apparently to bypass the fortification wall erected around the structure to protect it from a tunnel attack. The resulting explosion caused considerable damage to the post.[[362]](#footnote-362) Before the next attack in which Hamas used tunneling – against the Orhan post at the Gush Katif junction in the Gaza Strip – Hamas realized that Israel had responded by adding further layers of defense: erecting guard towers, setting out barbed wire coils, using surveillance and observation measures, and leveling the ground around the posts so that approaching operatives would have nowhere to hide. Therefore, Hamas decided to act against the post from underground and began to dig. On June 28, 2004, a tunnel under the post was blown up, killing one soldier and injuring five.[[363]](#footnote-363)

In 2003, Ra'id al-'Atar and Muhammad Abu Shmalla, two senior Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip, began to conceive an attack by means of a tunnel that would be dug from the Gaza Strip, under the fence, and into Israeli territory. Through another Hamas operative, 'Atwa Amur, they found a suitable piece of land owned by Usama al-Fara; when Abu Shmalla came to inspect the location, however he rejected it because he deemed it was too close to the fence and thus liable to be observed from the Israeli side.[[364]](#footnote-364) In total, between 2001 and 2004, there were five tunnel attacks resulting in seven Israeli deaths, almost all perpetrated by Hamas.[[365]](#footnote-365)

A tour given by Hamas operatives to an al-Jazeera journalist also included a visit to one of the organization’s tunnels. The entrance to the tunnel was hidden inside the floor of an ordinary house. The tunnel appears to be spacious; several people can be seen moving relatively freely, bending down only slightly. The Hamas operatives define it as “a 5-star tunnel,” reflecting its quality in the organization’s estimation. The journalist notes that the tunnel was constructed as part of Hamas’s war of intelligence with Israel, as a result of which the organization had opted to move its operations underground. According to Hamas spokesman Abu 'Abeidah, at that time Hamas dug 400-meter-long tunnels, spending approximately four months on each.[[366]](#footnote-366) In October 2007, Hamas operatives started to dig a tunnel from the home of Tala't Ma'ruf in Bait Lahiya to avoid detection by the IDF, and particularly by the drones used to observe terrorists.[[367]](#footnote-367)

During Operation Cast Lead, Israel discovered a tunnel network Hamas had prepared to use in a military confrontation. At least one was in Israeli territory, part of what the commander of the Southern Command described as “a multi-branched underground network.” According to an official Israeli state commission of inquiry, the successful subterranean preparations meant that Hamas’s “political leadership and senior military command structure had barely been touched, and the rate of fire had not stopped thanks to the distribution of weapons stores hidden in the ground.” Hamas learned from this operation and upgraded its underground systems. Starting in 2010, the organization managed to dig a variety of tunnels: smuggling tunnels, defense tunnels inside the Gaza Strip, tunnels for future fighting against Israel, and attack tunnels under the border fence that would serve operatives entering Israeli territory to carry out high-profile attacks.[[368]](#footnote-368) The underground dimension was used not only to plan attacks against Israeli territory but to conceal rocket launches. Thus, for example, during Operation Cast Lead, Hamas operatives were documented in the Khuza'ah area inside a tunnel that served as an underground pit from which to fire 120-mm rockets. According to Hamas, many rockets were launched from this position; although Israeli army personnel came very close to the site, they did not succeed in locating the operatives.[[369]](#footnote-369)

Hamas’s tunnel system reached its apex in the years leading up to Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021. In those years, while Hamas continued to dig attack tunnels aimed against Israel, its core effort was aimed at developing a subterranean city in the Gaza Strip underneath the homes of Gaza residents. This system earned the moniker “the Gaza metro.” Many years’ hard labor went into the creation of this underground system of dozens of kilometers, completely hidden from the naked eye. The tunnel network included headquarters, storage spaces, rocket launch positions, and much more. The cost per kilometer of tunnel has been estimated at $500,000, meaning that the expenditure for the entire network amounts to tens of millions of dollars.[[370]](#footnote-370)

It is worth noting that Israel has rendered a severe blow to the tunnel system. From a defensive standpoint, in the years preceding the operation, Israel built an underground barrier with advanced technologies along the border fence with the Gaza Strip to keep Hamas operatives in Gaza from penetrating Israel through tunnels. After Operation Protective Edge, and in the context of the lessons learned from the State Comptroller’s report on the topic, Israel embarked on an orderly process of constructing the barrier while ensuring cooperation among the relevant project partners.[[371]](#footnote-371) The final decision on the route best suited for the construction of the barrier was made in June 2016, with Israel willing to invest nearly NIS 3 billion in the effort. The plan was to construct a barrier to be dug dozens of meters into the ground and about six meters above ground along more than 60 kilometers of border.[[372]](#footnote-372) Dozens of engineers and laborers worked around the clock for some three years; the project reached its completion in October 2020.[[373]](#footnote-373)

The barrier proved its effectiveness during the clash. Throughout Operation Guardian of the Walls, Hamas did not succeed in reaching Israeli territory by a subterranean tunnel even once, unlike many cases in the past, such as the abduction of soldier Gilad Shalit and during high-value actions during Operation Protective Edge. According to IDF data, during the military operation, the IDF thwarted attempts attacks within and the tunnels, as well as dozens of kilometers of the tunnels themselves.[[374]](#footnote-374)

From an offensive standpoint, during Operation Guardian of the Walls, starting the night between May 13 and 14, 2021, Israel attacked the “metro” dug by Hamas at massive cost in time, manpower, and money. Every night, systematically, Israel bombed the underground system, each time focusing on a different Gaza Strip sector, to disable more than 100 kilometers of tunnels.[[375]](#footnote-375) Beyond the fact that Hamas’s entire investment was turned to dust, it is obvious that Israel had fairly accurate preliminary information about the “metro” routes, information that Hamas had tried – and apparently failed – to keep secret. This demonstrates that despite Hamas’s efforts at counterintelligence, Israel’s intelligence superiority is evident in clashes between the two actors, resulting in the disclosure of some of the organization’s secrets.

**Hamas’s Battle against the OSINT Threat**

From its inception, Hamas faced a tension between two imperatives: the need to publicize its actions as part of the battle over hearts and minds, both among Palestinians and in Israel, and the need to remain clandestine. This awareness created dilemmas and difficulties in decision-making, especially when assuming responsibility for attacks and publicizing details about the organization’s actions. On the one hand, Hamas saw the importance of claiming responsibility for operations so as to raise operatives’ morale, win over Palestinian public opinion, and heighten Israeli fears about the organization’s strength. Hamas also had to contend with the phenomenon in Palestinian society in which organizations falsely claimed responsibility for their rivals’ actions in an attempt to raise their standing. Moreover, Hamas suspected that Israel was a partner to disinformation campaigns in Palestinian society aiming to stimulate discourse that would help Israel discover the real attackers. On the other hand, Hamas was reluctant to publicize the details of the operations or identify the organization as the entity responsible.

Until 1987, the armed entities that predated Hamas, such as al-Majd, had largely conducted its operations against Israel in a non-public manner. While the start of the Intifada and the continuing nature of operations gradually forced the organization to enter the limelight, Hamas did so with a constant eye to the political and security situation. The desire for secrecy stemmed from the notion that secrecy would make it harder for Israel to discover the identity of the operatives. Thus, it would lead Israel to waste time and effort in an attempt to find the actors and gain time for the operatives responsible. Also, Hamas was concerned that even a fragment of information provided when claiming responsibility would give Israel a lead that would ultimately reveal much more about the organization.[[376]](#footnote-376)

Therefore, Hamas called on operatives to display moderation and overcome their natural inclination to claim responsibility, reassuring them that real recognition would come from Allah, not from other human beings. The organization also tried to strike the appropriate balance between considerations for and against going public. One strategy was to claim responsibility in a way that would make it difficult to identify the perpetrators, such as leaving a note devoid of identifying markers other than the fact that those involved were 'Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, or calling news agencies anonymously to report that Hamas was responsible for a certain action. An example may be found in Hamas operative Jamil Wadi’s aforementioned book, which was published by the organization and described a number of its operations in the early 1990s. At the beginning of the book, Wadi explains that while his intention is to share the details of operations for several reasons (which he goes into at great length), he does so with the requisite measure of caution. According to Wadi, one possible method is to rely extensively not only on his own knowledge, but also on what has been published in the Israeli media and is therefore no longer a secret.[[377]](#footnote-377)

The race to claim credit, resulting in the exposure of information in the open media, continued into the 2000s. In March 2008, the military wing of Hamas presented the differences of opinion and competition among the various factions of Palestinian society as a danger – the organizations hurry to publicize their actions, which allows Israel to focus its research and surveillance efforts on the correct entity. According to Hamas, competition of this kind forcibly erodes many of the organization’s capabilities vis-à-vis the media and exposes its secrets to one and all.[[378]](#footnote-378) Another consideration that received practical expression in Hamas’s policy on publicity was the need to demonstrate a consistent position to Israel. An example is evident in the case of the assassination of Hamas’s UAV engineer Muhammad al-Zuari in Tunisia in December 2016. After the assassination, which Hamas attributed to Israel, Hamas decided to publicize the fact that al-Zuari was a member of its military wing – an unprecedented decision, as Hamas customarily avoids taking responsibility and admitting its involvement in foreign countries. When a Hamas operative was asked about this choice, he responded that Hamas was aware that Israel saw – and had broadcast – the attack on al-Zuari as a severe blow to the organization. To refute the Israeli claim, Hamas had to prove its might; therefore, it decided to “out” al-Zuari’s identity and his connection with Hamas. Thus, the Hamas operative explained, Israel again lost the propaganda war, while Hamas was once more cast in a heroic light, inspiring its members and generating publicity, and leading other professionals to collaborate with the organization.[[379]](#footnote-379)

Hamas was also worried about media coverage that might endanger organizational assets. In 2006, a journalist for al-Jazeera came to cover the work and members of Hamas’s military wing. In this context, he met senior figures such as Ahmad al-Ja'bari and Muhammad Daif, who was introduced and filmed as a masked figure. The journalist was blindfolded, transported along an unknown route in a Hamas vehicle, and brought to the particular places selected by the organization for coverage. Only then was the blindfold removed. Moreover, at the beginning of his itinerary, his mobile phone and that of his cameraman were taken away in order to prevent the potential use of the phones for espionage. Throughout the coverage, all operatives except for Ahmad al-Ja'bari were masked to conceal their identities from the media.[[380]](#footnote-380)

One well-known Hamas strategy is to carry out its activities under civilian disguise or by locating areas of conflict in civilian centers. This was evident in the May 2021 Operation Guardian of the Walls, in which Hamas worried that media coverage might contradict the organization’s interests. Yahiya Sinwar admitted that some of the organization’s command centers were still in civilian areas.[[381]](#footnote-381) In order to preempt potential damage to its reputation, Hamas issued a letter to civilians and journalists in the Gaza Strip that forbade photography of rocket launches from the roofs of homes and apartment buildings. In this way, it attempted to project an image in which rockets were being launched only from open areas far from civilians.[[382]](#footnote-382)

**Conclusion**

Hamas’s counterintelligence is undoubtedly a significant component of the organization’s activities, in which it invests important resources, as is the case for other VNSAs. Hamas views Israeli intelligence as one of the nation’s primary strengths, and maintains that it must be offset in order to successfully confront Israel and thwart its actions. Over the years, the organization has scored some significant counterintelligence achievements. As described above, during the 1990s, Hamas managed to reorient itself and return to its usual activity every time Israel carried out a wave of arrests, evidence that although many of its secrets have been exposed by Israel, some remain concealed by the organization. In addition, operatives have eluded manhunts for several months at a time, and senior operatives, such as Muhammad Daif, remain alive despite Israel’s repeated assassination attempts. The starkest example of this success was the ability to keep Gilad Shalit hidden for so long without Israel being able to ascertain his whereabouts and free him from captivity.[[383]](#footnote-383)

Over the years, Hamas has studied how the Israeli intelligence services operate using diverse methods of intelligence gathering. It bases this investigation on its experience and on the previous knowledge it has gleaned throughout the clashes between the sides, as well as on extensive data collection. Much of that data is clearly the result of OSINT collection, but some is obtained by other means, such as double sources. All of this has proved useful for its operations and to raise awareness of Israel’s capabilities within the organization. In terms of operations, the knowledge accrued has been translated into a series of precautions, new methods, and the use of various means to minimize detection by Israel. These also include defensive counterintelligence measures such as physical security, personnel security, information security, and communications security, as well as offensive counterintelligence measures such as deception and neutralization.[[384]](#footnote-384)

When it comes to awareness, Hamas has done everything it can to raise its operatives’ awareness of Israel’s intelligence capabilities; the potential damage to the organization should information about it, its personnel, and its activities fall into the wrong hands; and what can be done to reduce this threat. The organization has developed materials explaining the Israeli intelligence services’ tactics, including highly detailed descriptions designed to convincingly demonstrate to its members the scope and significance of the threat.[[385]](#footnote-385) Interestingly, Hamas, an Islamic movement, uses the religious beliefs of its operatives to motivate them to better safeguard information in the name of Allah, both during questioning by Israeli security services and in the general public.

Hamas has had some triumphs over the years, despite the clear inferiority of its intelligence compared to that of Israel. Nonetheless, in many cases, Israel’s advantage in terms of intelligence has been painfully obvious, as evidenced by the targeted assassinations of dozens of Hamas operatives even when the organization has gone to great lengths to keep information covert. Furthermore, Israel’s discovery of the tunnels dug by Hamas in recent years from the Gaza Strip into Israel, and the disabling of these tunnels before they could be used in attacks, including the destruction of the Gaza “metro” during Operation Guardian of the Walls, was a resounding counterintelligence failure on the part of Hamas.

**Chapter 6: Operational Intelligence**

This chapter seeks to present how Hamas has brought its intelligence activity to bear against Israel using the full range of intelligence collection methods described in the previous chapters, as well as counterintelligence activities, while planning and carrying out operations and learning from each operation. While the contribution of intelligence to Hamas’s operational activities has been incorporated in previous chapters when relevant to the discussion, this chapter is dedicated to a concentrated description of various cases that demonstrate how intelligence and counterintelligence, in all their forms have consistently aided Hamas’s operations.

**Operational Intelligence until the Mid-2000s**

At the beginning of the First Intifada, Hamas’s operations were extremely basic, and the intelligence component was focused on microtactics. For example, young Hamas sympathizers would identify approaching buses by the noises emitted by their engines, without conducting any observation, and would hurl rocks at the buses.[[386]](#footnote-386) The intifada would later feature more complex activities that included the gathering of intelligence. In September 1992, while planning an attack on the French Hill station in Jerusalem, a transportation hub for soldiers, the cell members responsible for planning the attack decided that they would wear IDF uniforms in order to blend into their surroundings. According to their testimony, they first conceived of the idea upon learning about the IDF’s *mistarvim* units – Israeli soldiers who disguised themselves as Palestinians in order to carry out military operations or gather intelligence by blending in with the local populace.[[387]](#footnote-387) In November 1992, the Jerusalem cell that would eventually abduct and murder Nissim Toledano carried out an entire month of intelligence gathering before embarking on its mission. The four cell members, with Mahmud Musa 'Isa at the head, observed the routines of IDF and Israel Border Police troops in Jerusalem; their findings led them to conclude that it would be impossible to carry out the abduction in Jerusalem. Therefore, they turned to an alternate strategy.[[388]](#footnote-388)

In November 1992, Hamas’s first car bombing failed when the car was intercepted by Israeli security forces. Hamas then analyzed the incident to understand what had tipped off the Israelis. They concluded that the car had been relatively easily to identify because it had been stolen that very day and its particulars fed into the police database, its license plate had not been altered, and the vehicle had been stolen near the site of the attack in Tel Aviv. Additionally, the cell realized that the timing of the attack on the night of the Jewish Sabbath, when streets are relatively empty, made it easier for the Israeli forces to note suspicious cars.[[389]](#footnote-389) By studying Israeli security check procedures in the 1990s, Hamas members realized that in order to successfully pass the interrogation stage while using a forged Israeli identification card, an operative must know the names of the wife and children of the holder of the authentic I.D. card and be familiar with the neighborhood of the given address, including the name of the mayor or the head of the local council.[[390]](#footnote-390)

Dia Muhammad 'Aref Samur, a resident of the village of al-A'mari near Ramallah, organized a cell that would work to carry out attacks on Jews. In the summer of 1990, Samur wanted his cell to place a IED in Tel Aviv. To this end, he sent one member, Halmi 'Azat, to gather preliminary intelligence on the feasibility of such a mission. Bassim Za'l, another cell member who owned a car with Israeli license plates, drove 'Azat to Tel Aviv, where the latter walked around with a shoulder bag. At one point, he even boarded a bus in order to determine whether his appearance would arouse suspicion. He returned to Za'l’s car about 15 minutes later, having received the impression that it would be simple to place an IED in Tel Aviv. However, the cell members were arrested before the attack could be carried out.[[391]](#footnote-391) In 1997, Muhammad Sallah, a Hamas operative from the United States, recruited a new member to the ranks of Hamas. Two years later, in October 1999, Sallah sent his recruit to Israel to perform several tasks; as part of the assignment, the recruit scouted out specific locations in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas that could serve as potential targets for Hamas attacks.[[392]](#footnote-392)

The incident that may best demonstrate Hamas’s pre-operation information gathering in the 1990s is an attack that occurred in the Gaza Strip on December 7, 1992, in which a Hamas cell attacked an IDF vehicle carrying army reservists, killing three. The attack relied on intelligence and insights gathered by the cell involved. When planning the attack, they determined from the Israelis’ conduct that the Israeli side was quick to learn lessons, which led the Israelis to repair any oversights in their conduct by beefing up security wherever there were cell and studying the attackers’ modus operandi. It was therefore important to this cell to act in new locations and use different tactics than had been employed in the past. Until then, Hamas actions had until then been carried out from a moving point (such as a vehicle) toward a stationary IDF target, or, conversely, from a stationary point toward an Israeli moving target. This time, the cell chose to operate from a moving point toward an Israeli moving target in order to maintain an element of surprise against the Israelis, who were unfamiliar with this mode of attack. Another element of Hamas’s preparation for the attack was a study of Israel’s previous post-attack actions, such as the arrival of assisting forces, the closure of roads, and attempts to catch the perpetrators.[[393]](#footnote-393)

In the days leading up to the attack, a scouting and forward observation team was sent out to gather intelligence that was then collated by the leaders of the planned attack. The forward observation reports identified a Jeep driving down the road east of the Gaza Strip, which connected the Bait Lahiya checkpoint to the military police station. In the Jeep were three IDF combatants, either three enlisted soldiers or two enlisted soldiers and one officer. As the Jeep drove in one direction, a similar patrol drove in the opposite direction. The forward observers discovered that these patrols were conducted at times when there was traffic on the roads, primarily vehicles carrying Palestinian laborers to the Erez and Nahal Oz checkpoints. Therefore, the cell decided to carry out their mission before dawn, while it was still dark, and on December 7, a day on which a strike had been declared; they estimated that this would lead the road to be relatively busy, so that the attackers’ car would blend in with the day laborers’ vehicles. The information gathered demonstrated that the Israeli patrol had operated in the same way for some time. This indicated to the cell that the IDF was not prepared for the possibility of an attack in this location, particularly the kind they had planned – i.e., a drive-by shooting. It is noteworthy that in the post-attack debriefing, when the cell members learned what the Israelis had to say about the attack, their assessment was borne out: One of the soldiers in that sector stated that, had he been asked before the attack, he would have said that he and his comrades were lucky to have been stationed in such a calm and quiet location, relatively speaking.[[394]](#footnote-394)

On Friday, December 4, the operatives came to the attack site to assess the IDF’s potential reaction to an attack on the basis of past experience and the specific features of the region. They analyzed the possibility that assistance for the IDF force under attack would arrive and estimated the speed at which it would arrive. Furthermore, they noted additional patrols in the area, the routes taken by army vehicles to enter the site, and the locations of search and tracking positions. They also took into account that every patrol car maintained an open line and routing communications with its home base; as soon as contact was broken or an incident report came in, a force would rush out of the base at maximum speed. As such, the cell members scouted for the best escape routes for a retreat after the attack. With all the data in hand, the cell finalized its plan.[[395]](#footnote-395)

After the attack, the cell studied lessons learned and gained further insights. From the Israeli media, they came to understand the concrete outcome of the attack, immediate responses by senior leaders, and the attack's impact on the morale of the Israeli public. The latter included an open letter written by reservists in the Nahal unit, to which the three men killed had belonged. In the letter, the reservists urged Israel’s decision-makers not to turn the Gaza Strip irrevocably into another Lebanon, asking them to find a solution so that the killings would come to an end and soldiers would no longer constitute a convenient target for Hamas and other organizations to attack whenever and wherever they chose. The cell also examined the IDF's response to the event. According to their findings, soldiers arrived at the site 15 minutes after the attack. The medical corps that reached the scene and confirmed the deaths of the soldiers also attempted to ascertain who shot first so as to study the attackers’ modus operandi. They picked up the empty bullet casings in order to assess the number of attackers, the weapons used, and whether these weapons had been used in previous attacks – any clue that could led them to the perpetrators. At the same time, Israeli forces collected statements from the Palestinian laborers at the scene in order to learn more about the attack and the attackers. Finally, the IDF imposed an indefinite curfew on the Gaza Strip starting at 7 PM, and in the next few days increased the number of its troops on the ground.[[396]](#footnote-396)

Another incident demonstrating that Hamas studies the Israeli side and its tactics in depth and applies the lessons to future operations is the abduction of the soldier Nahshon Waxman. In October 1994, Jihad Yaghmur, a Hamas operative from East Jerusalem, conceived the idea of an abduction as a way to negotiate for the release of Hamas members sitting in Israeli prisons, first and foremost Shaikh Ahmad Yassin. To that end, Yaghmur traveled to Nablus to the military command center of the 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades; there, he met senior Hamas leaders including Yahiya 'Aiyyash, also known as “the engineer.” At the meeting, it was decided that Hamas would recruit additional young men to the organization and begin planning the operation. Yaghmur enlisted Hassan al-Natshah, Sallah Jad Allah, and 'Abed al-Karim Bader; the latter had participated in past abductions, and his experience and knowledge were critical to the mission. These men studied previous actions and drew conclusions, including with regard to the Israelis’ response. As the attackers left the West Bank and entered West Jerusalem, it was decided that Yaghmur, who was not known or wanted by the Israeli authorities, would drive the vehicle and conduct the conversation at the checkpoint. This in fact helped the cell to get past the barricade and enter the city.[[397]](#footnote-397)

Furthermore, based on lessons from previous operations, the cell chose in advance a secure place to hide the abductee. In addition, having identified the issue of their appearance as a potential weak spot, the cell members disguised themselves as national-religious Jews. Another key point was the vehicle: From their study of previous operations, the cell understood that the use of familiar tactics – such as using a stolen car, a private vehicle belonging to one of the attackers, or a car affiliated with their place of employment – would enable Israel to track them down. Therefore, Yaghmur rented a car without disclosing his identity. He went from one car rental agency to another until he found one where he could rent a car without having to leave some kind of identification behind. This indeed made it difficult to find the terrorists after the abduction.[[398]](#footnote-398)

The event ultimately took place on October 9, 1993. Based on lessons learned from previous operations, Yaghmur, who spoke excellent Hebrew, sat in the front passenger seat of the car. It was his job to offer a ride to a soldier without arousing suspicion; this soldier turned out to be Waxman, who was hitchhiking near Ben Guriont International Airport. Once they had successfully abducted Waxman, they brought him to the apartment in Bir Nabala that they had selected to this end. The most sophisticated part of the action began only there. Based on their study of IDF tactics, the cell planned an act of deception. They filmed Waxman, flanked by the members of the cell – masked in order to conceal their identities from Israeli intelligence – asking that Hamas prisoners be released to save him. The next day, Muhammad Daif, the head of Hamas’s military wing, who was then in the Gaza Strip, made a videotape of his own in which he assumed responsibility for the abduction and the abductors’ demands. This video was filmed by a Reuters cameraman in the Gaza Strip. Yaghmur, who was unknown to the Israeli authorities, traveled to the Gaza Strip to hand over the videotape the abductors had made of Waxman to Hamas. Thus, Reuters forwarded two videotapes, of Daif and of Waxman, to the media.[[399]](#footnote-399)

This act of subterfuge was successful. The situation assessment by Israel’s top brass was unanimous. They wanted to follow the bait by looking for Waxman in the Gaza Strip; Yitzhak Rabin exerted considerable pressure on Yasser 'Arafat, who had only recently received responsibility for the Gaza Strip, to find the abducted soldiers and his captors. Naturally, this came to nothing. 'Arafat, as well as the heads of the Palestinian Authority’s security services, such as Muhammad Dahlan, told Rabin that they had investigated and determined that the soldier was not in the Gaza Strip, and it would behoove the Israelis to look for him elsewhere. One piece of evidence that led the PA to suspect that Waxman was being held in the West Bank was the fact that one of the cell members in the video was wearing winter clothing, whereas the Gaza Strip was experiencing a hot spell. However, the trick had worked so well that the Israeli security services remained unconvinced.[[400]](#footnote-400)

Interestingly, the cell members believed their deception would be short-lived, and therefore prepared to mislead the Israeli security services once again. They forced Waxman to remove his uniform and dress in civilian clothing like their own, so that should a military action be taken to release him, it would be hard for the Israeli security services to tell the abductee from the abductor. Only four days later, after a chain of arrests of Hamas operatives, did it dawn on the Israelis that Waxman was being held near Jerusalem. By this point, Israel had lost valuable time. The search eventually led to the right building, but Waxman was killed in the rescue mission, which occurred mere minutes before the expiration of the abductors’ ultimatum.[[401]](#footnote-401)

This incident demonstrates that as early as 1994, beaten and bruised by years of assassinations, arrests, and expulsions, Hamas successfully executed a high-quality operation. The details of the operation indicate that Hamas engaged in deep analysis and study of the Israeli side based on the Israelis’ previous conduct, then translated the insights gained into an operational plan. This plan included a sophisticated deception that managed to mislead the entire Israeli intelligence community for 72 hours, despite the capabilities and strength of the latter. This is not to say that this level of intelligence awareness was typical throughout Hamas; it merely highlights the fact that, within the range of actions that Hamas took against Israel in the 1990s, several were based on the gathering and analysis of intelligence from the Israeli side.

The same preoperational intelligence features were evident in the 2000s. In mid-2001, Natshah 'Ihad, a Jerusalem resident, joined the armed wing of Hamas. His fireteam was tasked with the execution of attacks in Jerusalem; 'Ihad volunteered to take charge of intelligence for the fireteam and identify potential targets for attack in the city. 'Ihad did in fact tour the city and suggested various locations, including one in Pisgat Ze'ev, one on the 13 bus line, and one near the Clal Building.[[402]](#footnote-402) Similarly, before the March 9, 2002 attack on Café Moment in Jerusalem, the fireteam conducted surveillance; they selected the location because of its proximity to then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s home and its popularity with young people and soldiers. They felt that an attack on young Israelis would have a dramatic impact on public opinion, given the sensitivity of the Israeli public to early deaths.[[403]](#footnote-403)

In 2003, Shaikh Sallah Musa was part of a Hamas fireteam in Ramallah that sought to recruit young people for suicide missions against Jews. Musa contacted Bahij Bader and asked him to meet with a potential suicide bomber, as well as to scout out possible locations for a suicide attack in Israel. Bader met with Nassri 'Asi, a Hamas member who worked for him, as well as with his brother, Baher Bader (both of whom held Israeli I.D. cards) to identify locations for an attack. Several days later, Baher Bader informed 'Asi that he had found a suitable location – a heavily trafficked bus stop in Tsrifin – and the two traveled there for a closer investigation of the target. 'Asi was asked to observe the bus stop and identify the time when the bus stop was busiest. On September 9, 2003, at 5:45 PM, when activity at IDF open bases draws to a close and many soldiers start heading home, the fireteam carried out the attack, killing nine and wounding about 20.[[404]](#footnote-404) The same Hamas infrastructure from Bait Lakia was responsible for the attack in Tel Aviv soon thereafter. On behalf of the fireteam, two Hamas operatives conducted precise forward observation of sites near the Tel Aviv central bus station, and finally decided on an attack target on Har Tzion Boulevard. On July 10, 2004, the attack was put into action, leading to the death of one Israeli citizen and the wounding of more than 30.[[405]](#footnote-405)

The preparations for the 2003 suicide attack at Café Hillel in Jerusalem also provide a relevant example of preoperational intelligence. Ahmad 'Ubaid joined Hamas’s military wing in 2002. On the instructions of Sallah Subahi, a Hamas operative, he set up a fireteam and began to prepare the foundation for attacks by gathering intelligence. Ahmad recruited Na'al 'Ubid; for about six months, a long time for this sort of activity, the two collected considerable information and data about possible targets. The intelligence, which was transmitted to Subahi, focused on cafés and restaurants along Emek Refaim Street in Jerusalem. After examining the available options, Subahi settled on Café Hillel. The fireteam carried out the attack on September 9, 2003, killing seven Israelis and wounding 64.[[406]](#footnote-406) In the Gaza Strip, too, Hamas operatives surveilled IDF activity and identified opportunities to attack. For example, in January 2004, Muhammad Hassan, a Hamas military operative in the Gaza Strip, noted that a certain IDF tank was regularly parked in the same spot. He and 'Umar Hassan therefore hatched a plan to attack the tank, although the plan was never put into practice.[[407]](#footnote-407)

**The Abduction of Gilad Shalit**

Hamas monitoring of IDF activity in the Gaza Strip, as well as the use of the insights derived from intelligence for operational needs, continued after Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip. A major incident that demonstrates this is the abduction of the soldier Gilad Shalit in June 2006. Before digging the tunnel used in the abduction, Hamas performed in-depth intelligence gathering. At first, Hamas conducted forward observations all along the border with Israel, and the organization’s military wing analyzed the data generated. In light of this analysis, the southern sector, adjacent to Kerem Shalom, was selected as the optimal site for an action.[[408]](#footnote-408) Under the orders of Ra'id al-'Atar and Muhammad Sinwar, Hamas commanders carried out physical tours of the terrain, and the organization’s forward observers collected data about the topology of the Palestinian side across from the IDF outpost targeted.[[409]](#footnote-409) The timing of the attack – in the middle of the night between Saturday and Sunday – seems also to have been deliberately chosen. One needs only basic knowledge of the IDF, which Hamas undoubtedly had at this time, to be aware that IDF manpower is reduced on the weekends, as is the alertness of commanders and command centers. Therefore, the ideal time for an abduction would be at daybreak on a Sunday morning, after a restful Sabbath. Some have claimed that Hamas was even familiar with the standard IDF practice to enter and exit the tank through the back door rather than the turret in order to reduce the chance that the soldiers would be exposed to sniper fire. Thus, they knew that it would be possible to abduct a soldier through the back door of the tank.[[410]](#footnote-410)

As the time of the planned action drew close, Hamas operatives were busy day and night filming and documenting IDF outposts in the region. The mission commanders and the members of the fireteam analyzed the photos to learn a variety of data points, including: the topography of the route the men would take to storm the target, as well as the path of their retreat after the abduction; the behavior patterns of the soldiers in the outposts; and the routine of the IDF patrols along the fence.[[411]](#footnote-411) Mustafa Mu'amar, a Hamas operative apprehended by the IDF a few days before Gilad Shalit’s abduction, testified that for about two days he had videotaped various targets in the Kerem Shalom region where Shalit would be captured. His work was at the behest of the sector commander, Muhammad Abu Shimala, and the videotape with the findings was passed on to him when it was completed.[[412]](#footnote-412) In a speech he gave to the fireteam members just before they embarked on their mission to abduct Shalit, Ahmad al-Ja'bari said to them with some certainty that the soldiers located at the target of the mission were now in their cots, slumbering deeply – evidence that Hamas had studied Israeli soldiers’ routines in detail.[[413]](#footnote-413)

al-Ja'bari assumed that the Israeli reaction to the abduction would be a severe military blow to Hamas and the Gaza Strip. Therefore, the plan was to keep Shalit hidden for the duration of the Israeli reaction before beginning negotiations. Indeed, the organization correctly anticipated the Israeli response, with one reservation: An additional abduction carried out by Hizballah on the Israel-Lebanon border on July 12, 2006 led Israel to redirect much of its military force to the northern front. Otherwise, the Israeli military reaction to Shalit’s capture might well have lasted longer and been more intense. al-Ja'bari based his assessment in part on lessons learned from the northern sector and the Israeli reaction to Hizballah’s abduction of soldiers in 2000. After his abduction, Shalit was interrogated to elicit military information. The special team established by al-Ja'bari to handle Shalit in hiding consisted of men, like al-Ja'bari himself, who spoke decent Hebrew and therefore could communicate with Shalit.[[414]](#footnote-414)

The abduction shows numerous aspects of counterintelligence. The preparations were carried out under strict security directives. The locations for training and preparation were selected for their imperviousness to Israeli aerial intel gathering. The members of the fireteam were not told the nature and specific target of the mission until just before its implementation; only then were they told that they would be crossing the fence through an underground route and shown the tunnel.[[415]](#footnote-415)

Similarly, Hamas dug the tunnel in secret to conceal it from Israeli intelligence services. For the duration of the dig, Hamas’s forward observers kept a close watch on the IDF’s movements to preserve the secrecy of the operation. Moreover, Hamas monitored the diggers to ensure that their own conduct did not give them away. The dig was accomplished through relatively primitive means, as the noise of heavy machinery would have drawn undue attention; rubble was carted away mainly at night and in small quantities to avoid creating heaps that might have aroused suspicion. It has been claimed that the diggers were Hamas and Popular Resistance Committees members from the northern Gaza Strip who were brought to the south to do the work. According to this hypothesis, they were cut off from their families during and after the work until the abduction, a period that lasted several months.[[416]](#footnote-416)

Consequently, although the IDF was aware of movement in that sector and issued several warnings, there was nothing concrete to indicate the nature of Hamas’s planned operation. Moreover, as mentioned above, on June 23, 2006, two days before the abduction of Shalit, Israel captured the aforementioned Mustafa Mu'amar, who had been in on the planning and knew all the details. Mu'amar managed to withstand his intensive interrogations and only gradually revealed what he knew. Thus, his detailed knowledge of the preparations for the abduction came to light only on Sunday morning, a few hours after the abduction had already taken place, when it could no longer be used to foil the abduction.[[417]](#footnote-417) Here, too, it seems that Hamas had a better assessment of the situation than Israel. In Israel, Mu'amar’s arrest came as a relief – it was assumed that Hamas would not dare carry out its plan knowing that one of its key personnel was in Israeli hands. However, Hamas simply ramped up preparations even more, believing that Mu'amar would hold out against his interrogators long enough for the mission to be completed.[[418]](#footnote-418) It would be reasonable to assume that, given Hamas’s intensive observation of IDF activities in the sector, Mu'amar’s men did not see any change in Israel’s behavior after his abduction, or perhaps even noted a certain slackening. They may have decided to proceed with the mission based on this understanding.

Shalit was brought to a secret location immediately after the abduction. He needed medical attention; a Hamas *hakim* (a type of medic) was summoned to treat him, but only after the medic’s head was covered by a black sack to make it impossible for him to disclose the location. Shalit was guarded by the same two men, whose communication devices and cell phones were confiscated, throughout his first few weeks of captivity. Their only means of communication with the outside world was through a courier – one of al-Ja'bari’s personal confidants, who visited the site from time to time. The men charged with security were senior Hamas members, Ra'id al-'Atar and Muhammad Sinwar; the area where Shalit was held was controlled by a regional intel unit that tracked all movement in the sector and filed constant updates with Hamas’s leadership, using the cover story that they were guarding a senior Hamas figure. The security personnel stationed nearby were all members of the military wing and close to al-Ja'bari. Hamas tracked IDF activity, especially aerial activity and intel gathering by UAVs and observation balloons. Similarly, Hamas took note of heightened activity by collaborators and placed suspicious individuals, such as beggars wandering the streets in a peculiar fashion, under close surveillance. This was done on the assumption that Israel was deploying every available means of intelligence gathering in order to seize the tiniest scrap of information that could lead to Shalit’s location. To coordinate these efforts, Hamas used a unit dedicated to the identification, arrest, and interrogation of collaborators with Israel. Thus, for example, Hamas purportedly apprehended a Khan Yunis woman who arrived every day at noon at al-Najar Hospital and rooted around in the garbage for medical waste that might have been Shalit’s. Whatever she collected, she brought to the man who had recruited her, a Dir al-Ballah resident. In her interrogation, the woman admitted what she had been doing, but said she had no idea why; she only did what she had been asked to do in exchange for money. After her release, she met once again with her recruiter, this time under Hamas surveillance. Hamas operatives seized the man and interrogated him until he admitted that he was passing the sacks of medical waste on to Israeli intelligence officers at the Kisufim border crossing.[[419]](#footnote-419)

From the interrogations of the collaborators, Hamas came to realize that many individuals recruited by Israel at that time were residents of the Rafah area, and decided to undertake meticulous observation of specific targets. Hamas seems to have concluded that, at least for some length of time, Israel believed that Shalit was hidden in that region. Hamas’s compartmentalization was so extensive that al-Ja'bari vehemently refused to share anything about Shalit even with Hamas’s political leadership. Indeed, Isma'il Haniyyah, then the prime minister, wanted to meet with Shalit, but was thoroughly stonewalled by al-Ja'bari. In order to maintain secrecy with regard to Shalit’s location and other details of his detention, Hamas took every possible security measure. For example, when Israel wanted to transfer a new pair of glasses to Shalit via the Red Cross, Hamas refused to accept them, worried that Israel had implanted a device in the glasses that would disclose Shalit’s location.[[420]](#footnote-420) The fact that Hamas successfully held Shalit for almost five years right under Israel’s nose in the relatively small area of the Gaza Strip, and that Israel appears never to have discovered his location or managed to reach him, is a significant achievement, and indicates the sophisticated counterintelligence and impressive security precautions of those involved, as well as Hamas’s intimate familiarity with many of Israel’s intelligence capabilities and their latent capacity to endanger the organization and its activities.

**Operational Intelligence After Hamas’s Seizure of the Gaza Strip in 2007**

Even after the abduction, and after its seizure of the Gaza Strip a year later, Hamas continued to gather intelligence for operational purposes. In late 2007, Ra’id al-'Atar asked fellow Hamas operative 'Atwa 'Amur to find a house for sale in a location he had identified as frequented by IDF soldiers so that he could booby-trap and detonate it when soldiers entered.[[421]](#footnote-421) In 2008, Tala't Ma'ruf overheard a conversation between military Hamas operatives from Bait Lahiya in which they stated their intent to dig a tunnel towards land belonging to one Ahmad Da'ur, some 150 meters from Maruf’s house, after having noticed a hillock on Da'ur’s land that IDF troops would use as a staging area when preparing to operate in that sector. Hamas would use the tunnel to transport anti-tank devices and abduct soldiers.[[422]](#footnote-422)

An incident on July 28, 2014, during Operation Protective Edge, may serve as a further demonstration of the contribution made by Hamas’s forward observation activity, combined with its use of tunnels, to its operational missions. On that date, a Hamas fireteam penetrated Israeli territory via a tunnel, almost reaching the kibbutz Nahal Oz. Five Israeli soldiers at the post were killed in the ensuing firefight. In the weeks prior, Hamas had conducted extensive intelligence activity on IDF outposts along the border, and presented the data collected by the military wing’s forward observation units via maps and aerial photos in preparation for the action. Several days before the action, Hamas gathered information about the Nahal Oz outpost and its daily activity through focused observation.

A film released by Hamas shows forward observation photos of the outpost, taken during “a forward observation action of the military tower belonging to the Nahal Oz Regiment.” The photos indicate forward observation conducted in faint daylight (possibly just after daybreak or just before sunset) from a distance of only a few dozen yards from the outpost. It would seem that the operatives left the tunnel, completed their forward observation and photography tasks, and then returned to the tunnel. During their observation, they zoomed in on the target to examine the highest post of the guard tower, in an apparent attempt to better prepare the attack on the tower. The information gathered at this time was then crosschecked with infrastructure knowledge already possessed by the organization’s headquarters. After the authorization of the mission, one last photograph was taken to verify the data at the location designated for attack. The fireteam arrived at the tunnel 24 hours before the action and moved through the tunnel until it reached the opening at the other end. The force commander observed the target from the opening, then decided to exit in order to perform a full scan of the location before returning to the tunnel. Once again, the mission commander and his deputy exited for another observation. Dressed in camouflage, they moved undetected and observed the movement of IDF vehicles in the zone of action, then transmitted the data to headquarters.[[423]](#footnote-423) This data ultimately enabled the success of the mission.

In addition to its regular activity in the Gaza Strip, Hamas continued to gather operational intel to stage attacks from the West Bank. In the early 2000s, Basim al-'Umri and Musa Hamadah joined Hamas and worked with Hamas-affiliated groups. In 2007, they began work as Hamas representatives in the al-Aqsa compound. In July 2009, on a trip to Makkah, Hamadah met with someone calling himself “Basim the engineer,” who introduced himself as a Muslim Brotherhood operative. Basim asked Hamadah to provide him with information about Israeli sites, and Hamadah agreed. “Basim the engineer” even gave Hamadah a phone number via which they could communicate securely, but there is no indication that the two maintained contact.[[424]](#footnote-424)

Later, probably in the summer of 2010, as part of a terrorist activity planned against Israelis, al-'Umri and Hamadah resolved to carry out a mass-casualty attack at Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem. Their plan was to fire a missile at the stadium during a soccer match. The two carried out forward observation activities, including climbing up a hill known as Sharafat, which overlooked the stadium, to pick the right angle. The two were arrested in November 2010 before they had a chance to carry out their plan.[[425]](#footnote-425)

In August 2014, during Operation Protective Edge, several Hamas operatives from a village near Bethlehem, led by Ibrahim al-Zir, planned to assassinate then-Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who lives in the nearby settlement of Nokdim. The assassination, they hoped, would put a stop to Israel’s attacks on the Gaza Strip. Over the course of their preparations, the fireteam gathered intelligence about the minister’s motorcade; they patrolled the road near al-Zir’s village used by the motorcade and gathered information about every car, especially the GMC in which – so the fireteam members thought – Lieberman himself traveled. The plan, which was never implemented, was to fire an RPG at the vehicle.[[426]](#footnote-426)

During this period, Hamas planned to carry out several additional attacks from the West Bank that would involve intelligence gathering. This included work performed by Ma'in Sha'ar and Daud 'Aduan in late 2014 and early 2015 in preparation for an attack on the “Kiosk” checkpoint in the Abu Dis area. The two operatives studied IDF troop placements and the exact layout of the checkpoint, and conducted dry runs to scope out the route leading to the checkpoint.[[427]](#footnote-427) After their release from Israeli prison in 2016, several Hamas operatives from East Jerusalem set out to attack an IDF base on Mt. Scopus, near the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; to this end, they conducted forward observation of the base.[[428]](#footnote-428) In the same year, Hamas operatives Muhammad 'Azi and Nur al-Din Jit made plans to carry out shooting attacks on military and civilian vehicles driving down a West Bank road, for which they carried out forward observation of the road in question.[[429]](#footnote-429) In October and November 2017, a Hamas fireteam from the village of Tell near Nablus conducted meticulous observation of major traffic axes, travelers’ hitchhiking spots, and junctions in the area. The fireteam members intended to dress like Jewish settlers and lure locals to hitch a ride, whereupon they would abduct their passengers.[[430]](#footnote-430) In all of these cases, the Hamas personnel involved were arrested by Israeli security services before they had a chance to implement their plans.

In 2019 and 2020, a Hamas fireteam carried out several attacks on traffic axes and IDF positions in the Ramallah sector. At some point, the fireteam gathered intelligence for a highly sophisticated attack, with Teddy Stadium again selected as the target. 'Omar 'Id, a member of the fireteam who held an Israeli identification card, attended a match by the Beitar Jerusalem soccer team in December 2019 at Teddy Stadium. After observing the security arrangements and being impressed by their stringency, he realized that an attack there would be too complex to implement, and the plan was abandoned.[[431]](#footnote-431)

In addition to independent actions by Hamas operatives in the West Bank, Hamas personnel from the Gaza Strip often established online contact with their peers in the West Bank in order to gather preoperational intelligence. In early 2019, Hamas operatives from the Gaza Strip reached out to Iahiya Abu Diya, a 23-year-old operative from the village of al-Zaiym near Jerusalem. Their ultimate aim was an attack on the day of Israel’s parliamentary elections, scheduled for April 9, 2019. In addition to operational preparations, such as the purchase of a storage shed to conceal a car bomb, Abu Diya was asked to gather intelligence for the mission. Hamas personnel from the Gaza Strip instructed him to undertake forward observation of the city of Ma'ale Adumim, close to where Abu Diya lived, where considerable bus traffic serves both Israeli civilians and soldiers. Abu Diya gathered intelligence on busy locations in the vicinity and passed his findings on to his Hamas contacts in the Gaza Strip, who used this information to select the optimal target for attack. Abu Diya was arrested by the Israeli security services on March 31, only a few days before the plan was to have been put into effect.[[432]](#footnote-432)

A similar incident occurred in 2020, when Bilal Kurdi, a member of Hamas’s cyber unit in the Gaza Strip, used social media to contact two adolescents living in the village of Bait Ummar. While they were recruited to carry out shootings or even an abduction, for many long months the boys’ primary activity entailed intelligence gathering. They were asked to gather information about nearby Jewish settlements; in response, they sent photos of Bat Ayin and Kfar Etzion, and submitted maps and locations of IDF troops in the area. The two boys were arrested in October 2020, before they had a chance to attack.[[433]](#footnote-433)

Hamas also decided to engage in the study of Israel and the IDF in order to build a portfolio of potential Israeli targets. For example, a Hamas MID document from early 2012, entitled “List of Nearby Kibbutzim,” surveys the infrastructure of Jewish communities near the Gaza Strip up to a 6-km radius from the border. The introduction to the document describes its purpose: to provide information that will make it possible to attack these communities, both because they are centers serving the IDF’s deployment in the region, and because such attacks would force the Israeli army to change its deployment patterns, something that the authors of the document claim has already happened in the past. Hamas’s MID constructed a “target file” for every community that included a range of details, such as its distance from the border, number of inhabitants, times of community activities, and phone numbers and email addresses of officials. The files also included aerial photographs and pictures depicting population centers (e.g., commercial centers), agricultural lands, and military installations. We may surmise that this information was all gathered from open online sources.[[434]](#footnote-434)

An image from 2012 is a sample document from the target file on Kibbutz Mefalsim. The aerial photograph of the settlement is marked with dots; the key appears next to the map. The sites that Hamas’s MI opted to mark include the dining hall, the offices, the sports field and swimming pool, and the kibbutz’s private housing project.[[435]](#footnote-435) These could be used to aim rocket fire, as well as to guide terrorists crossing the border by tunnels in order to carry out a localized attack within the settlement.[[436]](#footnote-436)

As described extensively in Chapter 2 above, this activity, in addition to reliance on OSINT, was one of the central RFIs given to sources recruited by Hamas to its HUMINT activity. New recruits were asked to tour Israel and learn the locations of military and other security sites, main roads, Iron Dome batteries, and so on, all of which served Hamas to direct fire at these locations – to the extent possible with statistic weapons such as the rockets used by the organization.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of intelligence collection is to use the intelligence gathered to serve an organization’s aims at all levels, including operational activity, especially when it comes to terrorist organizations. With Hamas, we see a gradual development in its concern with intelligence in the operational sphere. At the outset, the organization focused mostly on local, tactical gathering; the processing of the intelligence was basic, focused on implementing the information gathered in order to carry out attacks. In some instances, the organization gathered extensive information, paying attention to small details that would ultimately play a critical role in the operations’ success. While Hamas achieved some victories against Israel that did not involve a significant intelligence aspect, such as the bus bombings in city centers during the 1990s, we do see that in many cases the intelligence component contributed greatly to the operations’ success.

Another significant use Hamas makes of operational intelligence is in the construction of a “bank” of potential targets for attack. The operational need to provide targets for the organization’s growing rocket arsenal – growth both numerical and in terms of range – required Hamas to engage in intelligence gathering deep inside Israeli territory. To achieve this, in the mid-2000s, Hamas began to expend extensive efforts to make use of various methods of intelligence gathering, mostly by handling human sources against strategic and important targets in the Israeli home front, in addition to freely available OSINT.

As shown in the previous chapter, Hamas has done everything in its power to thwart Israel’s intelligence efforts to expose the organization’s activities; this has also been manifested in operational activities. Hamas’s success in maintaining its level of secrecy was a crucial component in being able to plan and implement its abductions of soldiers. These succeeded not only because of preliminary gathering of high-quality intelligence but because of the organization’s ability to hide the preliminary stages of the operations, thus preventing Israel from thwarting them ahead of time even when Israel’s suspicions had been aroused with regard to a given sector.

**Chapter 7: Hamas’s Research, Analysis, and Assessment**

**Israel and the IDF: Learning and Analysis**

Since its founding, Hamas has sought to analyze the modus operandi of Israel and the IDF, although until the 2000s its analysis primarily focused on tactical aspects. Thus, the objectives noted in Hamas member Jamil Wadi’s book, which details a number of Hamas actions in the early 1990s, include the need to study the military and security lessons learned in both the battle of wits and the on-the-ground struggle with Israel’s intelligence services. To that end, Wadi shows his readers how the Israeli security forces in those years acted after Hamas operations and how to counter actions of this kind, among other insights.[[437]](#footnote-437) For example, as early as the 1990s, Hamas operatives were aware of the means used by Israel to thwart terrorist activity, such as detection dogs. When smuggling arms, operatives would sprinkle black pepper in their vehicles to confuse the dogs sniffing the cars. Additional insights gleaned by Hamas operatives from their study of Israeli tactics, subsequently put to use in the organization’s operational activity against Israel and the IDF, may be found in Chapter 6 above.[[438]](#footnote-438)

After Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the institutionalization of Hamas’s military wing in its new configuration, the organization began to deepen its comprehensive study of Israel and the IDF. In 2007, Hamas’s military wing in the Gaza Strip started to produce a monthly publication series called *Know Your Enemy*. The introduction to the first issue explained how important it is for Hamas members to know their enemies well, and in particular to maintain familiarity with their strengths and weaknesses. The series provided support for this claim from the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who studied all the enemies he fought and was careful to safeguard his secrets. The material stressed that Israel’s most important force lay in its technological weaponry, as the nation deploys one of the strongest armies in the world and is a leading exporter of arms. Therefore, the authors of the *Know Your Enemy* publication sought to share information about Israel’s technological strengths, such as airborne vehicles and forward observation capabilities, as well as strategies to counter them.[[439]](#footnote-439)

In 2009, based on lessons learned by Hamas in Operation Cast Lead, the organization established its military academy. This initiative was spearheaded by Dr. Dirar Abu Sisi, an expert in missiles and rockets, alongside senior Hamas figures in the Gaza Strip. One the partners in the establishment of the academy was Muhammad Dababsh, the first director of Hamas’s Military Intelligence Department (MID), and the military section of the curriculum included materials on the weapons used by Israel.[[440]](#footnote-440)

*The* *Israeli Army: Military Areas* is a 2013 film produced by the southern Gaza City brigade and the Information Ministry of Hamas’s military wing. The film aims to enhance Hamas combatants’ knowledge of the IDF and its units, both in general and specifically in relation to the Gaza Strip area. It provides an extensive survey of the IDF and its deployment in different zones, as well as a general overview of the enemy’s mindset. First, there is a brief background section on the establishment of the IDF, from the founding of the state and the Israeli Declaration of Independence to the present day, in which American support has equipped the army with first-rate military equipment. The film goes on to describe the structure of the army, including its regional headquarters and service branches (Air Force and Navy). The film’s focus is on the regional commands, including the borders between the sectors and their geographical divisions. It also presents the command hierarchy from the division level down to the company level. The commands are described as in charge of all combat, hence their importance; the film enumerates their functions and spheres of responsibility.[[441]](#footnote-441)

Later, the film surveys the regional commands one by one. It discusses the Northern and Central Commands, including their history, the location of their headquarters, function descriptions, and relevant divisions, then presents information about the Home Front Command. The film proceeds to focus on information relevant specifically to the Gaza Strip theater. First, there is a similar description of the mission of the Southern Command, the location of its headquarters, and the composition of the units that answer to it. At this point, there begins a detailed breakdown of the IDF’s deployment in the Southern Command. The film covers the various border passages between Israel and the Gaza Strip (Erez, Karni, etc.) and Egypt and the Gaza Strip (Rafah), including the location and function of each crossing. The survey goes on to focus on the Gaza Division, its history, and its composition (two regional brigades – northern and southern – as well as other units, including an artillery battalion and a communications battalion). The resolution grows higher with a painstaking analysis of every brigade, every regional battalion, the zone of responsibility of every battalion, and every fortification and outpost along the system fence in every battalion, including special attention to observation towers and fence gates. Each fortification, gate, and observation tower is displayed alongside Google Earth photographs that show its location in the region.[[442]](#footnote-442)

An information sheet designed to raise the public’s awareness of the enemy, produced by the forward observation unit of Hamas’s MID in the Central Camps Brigade, also demonstrates how Hamas studies the Israeli side and transmits knowledge to its combatants. One side of the sheet shows photographs and descriptions of various types of weaponry used by the IDF – tanks, APCs, cameras, radar, planes, and other aerial vehicles. The other side links beret colors to IDF service branches, explains the military rank system, and shows the flags of the IDF’s various field units.[[443]](#footnote-443)

As mentioned above, Hamas has devoted considerable study to the weapons used by the IDF. This effort is palpable in the organization’s guidebook for its anti-tank operatives. Half of the guidebook, about 120 pages, is devoted to an extensive breakdown of IDF’s armored vehicles, in particular tanks and armored personnel carriers. The chapter on tanks provides a history of the Merkava’s development and details of its unique features. It continues with separate in-depth analyses of each Merkava model, from the Mark I to the Mark IV, including technical specs, structure, the placement and job of each team member, their visual and forward observations systems, and the model’s weaponry. The manual lists every change and improvement of each successive model as compared to its predecessor. It provides information about older models still used by the IDF at the time of the guidebook’s composition, such as the Magach 7, and notes any upgraded systems; it even displays and explains the tactical markings on the tanks. A sizable section of the guidebook is devoted to the tanks’ defensive systems, including a comprehensive survey of the Trophy active defense system. The chapter ends by pinpointing, model by model, where to aim fire to penetrate the tanks’ weakest spots.[[444]](#footnote-444)

The book’s second chapter deals with the IDF’s armored personnel carriers (APC). This chapter also breaks down most of the APCs in army use, from the veteran M113 nicknamed “Achzarit” to the newest, “Tiger.” The chapter also analyzes armored engineering tools, such as the Puma and D9 bulldozer. In addition, it describes the structure, capabilities, usage histories, and strengths and weaknesses of all the vehicles mentioned. The explanations are accompanied by numerous illustrations with the relevant features marked.[[445]](#footnote-445)

Operation Protective Edge demonstrated the practical implementation of the intelligence gathered and assimilated among Hamas operatives. On July 20, 2014, the 13th Battalion of the Golani Brigade entered the Sajahiya neighborhood in the eastern part of Gaza City. The force included several tanks and two M113 APCs. One of the APCs was trapped in the field, and its evacuation was delayed. During this interval of time, an anti-tank missile was fired at the tank, killing seven of its occupants; the body parts of one of the victims, Oron Shaul, were then held for ransom. It is no accident that the impact of the attack was so deadly. Hamas was intimately familiar with the M113, and identified it as extremely vulnerable, as it is not sufficiently armored; they knew the locations of its weakest spots, such as the rear opening of the Zelda2 model, the upper roof, and so on. Thus, Hamas’s exhaustive study resulted in a significant operational success for the organization.[[446]](#footnote-446)

Of course, Hamas’s intelligence gathering is not limited to the accumulation of potential targets, as described above. The organization also pays close attention to the IDF’s conduct in combat, particularly with regard to bystanders and civilians identified in the vicinity of weapons or Hamas operatives. Hamas has come to a deep understanding of Israel’s catch-22: If Israel refrains from attacking, Hamas can continue and even intensify its operations, but if Israel attacks, it will harm non-combatants, leading to international condemnation that delegitimizes the action. This may be seen, for example, in an episode from Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021. In remarks delivered shortly after the crisis, upon the completion of his tenure, Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva, head of the IDF Operations Directorate, provided firsthand testimony of this dilemma. Haliva described how, after launching five sophisticated and expensive missiles at a particular target in the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces received new intelligence indicating that the attack might result in non-combat casualties. It was therefore decided to halt the attack and divert the valuable weaponry toward the sea, despite the financial and strategic loss incurred by this decision.[[447]](#footnote-447)

Thus, Hamas has aimed its efforts at assimilating its activity into civilian environments in several major ways: situating military and security infrastructures inside population centers; placing rocket and mortar bomb launchers near homes, schools, and mosques; proactively using civilians, including children and adolescents, to occupy sites that would be likely IDF attack targets; and placing installations in hospitals and using ambulances to evacuate terror operatives.[[448]](#footnote-448)

Even before Operation Cast Lead, Hamas would place its weapons stores on the lower floors of residential buildings, knowing that the IDF would be unable to attack the building itself or would only be able to attack its upper stories. In one case around the year 2007, when the IDF warned of an imminent attack on a Hamas structure, numerous civilians were summoned to the rooftop of the building; Hamas understood that when the IDF identified the people gathered there as civilians, it would not attack the building.[[449]](#footnote-449) In 2007, children were sent to scout out a Golani force operating in the Gaza Strip. Immediately after the children located the force, fire was opened on the troops. In the army’s debriefing of the incident, it became evident that Hamas had intentionally dispatched the children to find the Israeli force.[[450]](#footnote-450) Operations Cast Lead and Protective Edge are replete with examples in which Hamas operated in this manner.[[451]](#footnote-451)

The organization’s efforts paid off. After Operation Cast Lead, the U.N. appointed Judge Richard Goldstone to head a committee of inquiry into the conflict. The committee report criticized Israel for harming innocent bystanders in the operation. This use of civilian infrastructures has continued into recent years. For example, in June 2017, UNRWA revealed that its personnel had located a tunnel dug by Hamas underneath two schools in the al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip.[[452]](#footnote-452)

**Strategic and Operative Analysis and Assessment**

Immediately after Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005, and even more so after Hamas seized control of the Strip in June 2007, Gaza Strip residents and in particular Hamas leadership began to consider the possibility that Israel would return to Gaza and engage in a large-scale military operation. In March 2007, for example, the Hamas television channel al-Aqsa broadcast a program devoted to the question of a possible Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip. The show hosted civilians who discussed the issue from diverse perspectives, as well as presenting a variety of considerations – military, political, social – that could affect an Israeli decision with regard to a large-scale incursion.[[453]](#footnote-453)

In May 2007, al-Aqsa broadcast an extended program about preparations for a large-scale Israeli operation by various Gaza Strip organizations, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Resistance Committees, the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, and of course Hamas’s military wing. Operatives from the different groups shared their assessments of the likelihood that such an operation was imminent, as well as their preparations and training in response. In the footage, the Hamas spokesman says that his organization takes this possibility seriously, given the Israeli government’s desire to score points in domestic public opinion and prove the existence of Hamas tunnels to the Arab world. He also mentions the desire of senior Israeli figures to rehabilitate their status, referring both to the political echelon (headed by then-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who faced criminal charges at the time) and the military echelon (in light of the army’s failures in the Second Lebanon War and the disengagement from the Gaza Strip).[[454]](#footnote-454)

On September 14, 2007, Hamas held an exercise in the northern Gaza Strip in the presence of senior operative Nizar Rian. The exercise was part of Hamas’s preparations to complete a defensive plan against IDF troops in the event of their entrance to the Strip. Certain cells of Hamas’s military wing tasked with confronting the IDF’s infantry units took part in the exercise.[[455]](#footnote-455) In late 2007, Hamas’s military wing was already busy preparing for a large-scale Israeli action. Its operatives trained for such a scenario, including the use of IEDs, anti-tank missiles, and light weapons, some of which were looted from Fatah warehouses after Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in June of that year.[[456]](#footnote-456) Moreover, as part of its preparations, Hamas mapped the IDF’s expected entrance routes; this mapping became the basis for planting IEDs and mines along these axes to attack IDF troops when they entered.[[457]](#footnote-457)

An extensive military action of this kind did in fact come to pass. At midday on Saturday, December 27, 2008, Operation Cast Lead began. The opening salvo consisted of a simultaneous attack by dozens of Israeli Air Force (IAF) airplanes on various Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip. The operation was preceded by a period of tension that began with the violation of the *tahadiya* – the mutually-agreed calm between the sides – on November 4, 2008, when the IDF took action to expose and neutralize a Hamas terror tunnel near the al-Burij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. Subsequent to that action, in which several Hamas operatives were killed, the sides exchanged blows until Israel ultimately opted to embark on a large-scale operation.[[458]](#footnote-458)

Despite the preliminary preparations and the period of tension, there is ample evidence that the operation caught Hamas off guard. At the time of the attack, senior Hamas personnel – including Isma'il Haniyyah – were in their offices, contrary to the evacuation procedure for command centers and offices when an Israeli attack is anticipated. The al-Saraya complex, which houses Hamas’s government ministries, was fully staffed. The clearest evidence for Hamas’s miscalculation is a graduation ceremony for a police officers’ course that was held on the parade grounds in the heart of Gaza City. The site was bombed, and some 90 Hamas operatives were killed, including Tawfiq al-Ja'bari, the chief of police. Had Hamas anticipated a large-scale operation in the near future, the ceremony would not have been held, certainly not outdoors and certainly not in the daytime.[[459]](#footnote-459)

To understand Hamas’s erroneous assessment of the Israeli course of action, we must consider the data available to Hamas and the organization’s various considerations. On the Thursday before the attack, the assistant to Egypt’s defense minister, Ahmad 'Abd al-Halik, called senior Hamas operative Mahmud al-Zahar to warn him that Israel was planning on dealing Hamas a crushing blow; this warning was issued on the basis of signals he picked up from a meeting between then-Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and President Mubarak. Abd al-Halik shared his view that Israel’s intentions were serious. Musa Abu Marzuk, another senior Hamas figure, received a similar message. On the other hand, Hamas also received various indications to the contrary. Investigative journalist Shlomi Eldar testifies that he sailed from Limassol to the Gaza Strip about a week before the operation. On the vessel, he met Abed Haniyyah, the son of Isma'il Haniyyah, who tried to coax Eldar to reveal which way the winds of war were blowing in Israel. Haniyyah wanted to know whether Israel was planning a large operation and whether Israel was serious in its intentions to attack. Eldar answered that, based on what he was seeing in the Israeli media, Defense Minister Barak was striving for calm rather than escalation.[[460]](#footnote-460)

Hamas’s assessment that Israel was not about to begin a large ground assault was also influenced by the claims of figures such as Khalid Mash'al and Ahmad al-Ja'bari. These latter felt that the upcoming parliamentary election in Israel would restrain the Israeli government from embarking on a broad operation. Furthermore, abducted soldier Gilad Shalit was still held by Hamas, leading the organization to conclude that Israel would not undertake an action further liable to endanger Shalit. In 2007 and 2008, there were several incidents that inspired “the winds of war” to blow in Israel, but ultimately did not lead to a large-scale operation; this provided additional support for the assumption that this time, too, there would be no significant response.[[461]](#footnote-461) Other factors that may have played a part in Hamas’s failure to foresee the attack was Israel’s bitter experience in the Second Lebanon War and its anticipated lack of international support for another military action, both of which would cause Israel to hesitate before beginning a large operation. Finally, some sources claimed that Israel was afraid of starting an operation because of the danger that it might get dragged into a confrontation on several fronts, including possible escalation in Lebanon and in the West Bank, were it to carry out a large-scale attack on the Gaza Strip.[[462]](#footnote-462)

Israel did its best to bolster Hamas’s assessment that there was no large-scale operation on the horizon. According to Maj. Gen. (res.) Yoav Gallant, commander of the Southern Command at the time of Operation Cast Lead, one of his command’s operating assumptions was that Hamas lacked strategic intelligence because it relied solely on analysis of media reports – that is to say, OSINT. Operationally and tactically, however, Hamas had better intelligence, as it made use of forward observation and constantly learned from previous engagements with the IDF – a frequent occurrence in 2007 and 2008. Thus, it had come to certain realizations about the Israeli army’s capabilities and modus operandi, improving its own ability to confront the IDF. Gallant maintained that the lack of access to non-open-source intelligence for strategic analysis prevented Hamas from discovering Israel’s intention to embark on a large-scale operation: In the weeks leading up to Operation Cast Lead, it was often stated in the Israeli media that terrorism could not be vanquished by military means and rocket fire was inevitable, leading Hamas to think that a major Israeli move was unlikely.[[463]](#footnote-463)

After the Israeli cabinet’s decision to take action on Wednesday, December 24, it intentionally leaked a number of hints that caused Hamas to take cautionary steps and evacuate a number of sites, some of which had been designated for attack.[[464]](#footnote-464) At the same time, the IDF was careful not to allow other information that would contradict its desired message to reach Hamas. Strict compartmentalization was enforced, and information about the imminent attack was not passed on to the operational ranks (at or below the rank of division commander) before the aerial strike that began the operation. The plans for the operation had long since factored in the need for secrecy. The ground operation was planned to commence only four or more days after the airstrikes because of the need to move troops from other sectors to the Gaza Strip; because of the imperative to maintain secrecy, these troops received no prior warning about the operation, so that the transfer of troops could only begin after the airstrikes had taken place.[[465]](#footnote-465)

The Israeli political echelon also engaged in deception and misdirection in order to maintain secrecy. The memo issued by the government after the conclusion of the Wednesday cabinet meeting, three days before the operation, devoted only a single line to the Gaza Strip; instead, it concentrated on the other issues discussed in the meeting, especially the banning of many radical Islamic organizations. Moreover, the next day, the defense minister’s bureau announced the opening of the Israel-Gaza Strip border crossings and authorized the entrance of humanitarian aid in order to reinforce Hamas’s belief that the Israeli response would not grow more severe. Further, the Prime Minister’s Office announced that the following Sunday the cabinet would hold further discussions on action to be taken vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip, deflecting any expectations of an extensive Israeli operation before that time. In addition, some enlisted IDF troops stationed along the Gaza Strip border were given a weekend furlough in order to transmit a sense of business as usual.[[466]](#footnote-466)

The following demonstrates the extent to which Israel understood Hamas’s reliance on open sources and the media in its assessment of strategic intelligence: The ground incursion of Operation Cast Lead was planned for the Thursday after the aerial attack, but due to inclement weather, it was postponed until Friday. Nevertheless, after a broadcast by Roni Daniel, then the military analyst for Israel’s Channel 2, reported that the ground offensive was set to begin on Friday, the offensive was postponed to Saturday. This was based on the operating assumption that Hamas based its strategic decision-making on the information available in the open media, and it was therefore reasonable to think that it had received the message.[[467]](#footnote-467)

It is therefore possible to say that Hamas’s failure in assessing the start of Operation Cast Lead took place on two levels: the information level, i.e., the lack of high-quality, firsthand sources of information about Israel’s decision-making as well as Israel’s processes of compartmentalization, deception, and misdirection; and the conceptual level, i.e., an erroneous analysis of Israel’s network of considerations at the time. The outcome was catastrophic for the organization, which suffered a major blow at its very outset.

Several years later, in 2012, Hamas was again taken by surprise. Here, too, despite tension and escalation between the sides, one may say with certainty that Hamas did not expect Israel to begin a full-fledged operation – because had it done so, Ahmad al-Ja'bari, the highly circumspect head of Hamas’s military wing, would not have been traveling completely exposed and vulnerable through the streets of Gaza, where he was assassinated by Israel. In this case, it seems that Hamas had even more reasons to surmise – or at least entertain as a possible scenario – that Israel would escalate the situation. Beyond the organization’s bitter failure in Operation Cast Lead, which one would think would have led it to exercise much greater caution, the Shalit deal was already complete, so potential harm to the abducted soldier was no longer a concern for Israel. Moreover, at that time, the Iron Dome system had already demonstrated its initial effectiveness in helping to reduce damage to the Israeli home front from rockets launched in the Gaza Strip, so the restraining factor of concern over massive harm to civilian lives and property had also been somewhat diminished.

On the other hand, when the operation began, after the October 2012 dissolution of the Knesset, Israel was mired in an election campaign that culminated in the January 2013 election. Still, in this sense as well Hamas could have learned from Operation Cast Lead, as it also took place in an election season. However, another factor might have affected the organization’s thinking: Starting in August 2012, the pro-Hamas Muslim Brotherhood regime, headed by Muhammad Mursi, assumed the reins of government in Egypt. Hamas may have believed that Israel would not embark on an operation in this new, post-Mubarak geopolitical reality. Furthermore, it is clear that Hamas’s assumption that Israel would not go to war was also, once again, the result of deception perpetrated by Israel. According to then-Defense Minister Barak, deception of this kind was conducted both overtly and covertly. The open stratagems included a visit by the Prime Minister and Defense Minister to the northern border at the height of tension on the morning of the al-Ja'bari assassination, intended to draw attention to the northern sector. There was also the statement by Minister Benny Begin, a member of the “forum of nine” that decided security issues, that the government should act with restraint and select the right moment to proceed in light of a complex set of considerations.[[468]](#footnote-468) The deception was indeed effective, temporarily reassuring Hamas and leading it to erroneous conclusions about Israel’s next steps.

The case of Operation Protective Edge, which began in July 2014, differs from its predecessors. It was preceded by Hamas's abduction of three young men in the West Bank, as well as widespread Israeli activity in the West Bank and Gaza in response to rocket fire and general escalation. Israel announced in advance that its goals for its operation in the Gaza Strip were limited, and it did not attempt to communicate any other message through subterfuge. Moreover, not only was Hamas not surprised by the Israeli operation, but the organization even hoped for a high-intensity conflict because of its complex domestic and geostrategic situation at the time.[[469]](#footnote-469)

Some interpret Hamas’s desire for an escalation with Israel at this point as another failure in assessment of strategic intelligence. According to this thesis, the organization thought it would be able to cause more damage to Israel than it in fact successfully did. It also miscalculated the resilience of Israeli society in the face of extended warfare, thinking that so much domestic criticism would be exerted that the fighting would be cut short.[[470]](#footnote-470) Hamas was also surprised by the Iron Dome system’s effectiveness against extremely heavy rocket barrages, contrary to prior expectations.[[471]](#footnote-471) Possible evidence for this claim comes in the form of the relative calm that lasted for almost 7 years on the Gaza Strip border since Operation Protective Edge, with Hamas sometimes playing a restraining role and preventing escalation as a lesson from that earlier, erroneous assessment.

Yet that calm was broken in May 2021.[[472]](#footnote-472) On May 10, Israel celebrated Jerusalem Day, which commemorates the battle for Jerusalem in the Six-Day War wherein control of the eastern part of the city, including the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, shifted from Jordan to Israel. In light of concerns about Palestinian disruptions of public order and security that day, the Israeli security forces increased their presence in sensitive locations in the Old City of Jerusalem. In response, Palestinian terrorist organizations issued an ultimatum: Unless Israeli security forces withdrew from these areas, they would launch an attack. A little after 6 PM, seven rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Jerusalem, a highly unusual event; this in turn generated a fierce reaction from Israel, the opening salvo in Operation Guardian of the Walls (or, as Hamas called it, Saif al-Quds, “Sword of Jerusalem”). The operation lasted 11 days and included Israeli attacks on terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, as well as the launch of thousands of rockets from the Gaza Strip toward Israeli cities and towns.[[473]](#footnote-473)

In his summary of the operation, sent to all IDF commanders and soldiers, Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi declared that “Hamas made a serious mistake when it decided to start firing rockets at the State of Israel and its citizens, and it has paid a heavy price. Throughout the operation, the enemy was surprised time and time again by a series of multidimensional blows that shook it out of its equilibrium and denied it significant capabilities and assets.”[[474]](#footnote-474) Other analyses similarly understood Hamas’ decision to fire at Jerusalem as a misstep. According to these interpretations, Hamas expected that the move would elicit only a limited response from Israel and involve a limited round of escalation, as had been the case on a number of occasions since Operation Protective Edge. However, Israel responded with an operation of much greater intensity and duration than Hamas expected.[[475]](#footnote-475)

One of the bigger surprises laid at Hamas’s doorstep was Israel’s attack on Hamas’s so-called “metro system.” As mentioned in Chapter 5, one of Hamas’s major efforts to confront Israel’s military superiority, and the result of lessons learned from Operation Protective Edge, was the development of an underground city nicknamed “Gaza’s metro” directly underneath the homes of Gaza Strip inhabitants. Through many years’ intensive work at tremendous cost, Hamas built an underground system of dozens of kilometers invisible to the naked eye. This system included an intricate network of tunnels containing command centers, storage spaces, rocket launch positions, etc. The cost per tunnel kilometer has been estimated at half a million dollars, so that the whole complex cost many tens of millions of dollars.[[476]](#footnote-476) Hamas’s investment in this particular field was no accident. Israel cannot carry out aerial observations of tunnels; likewise, it cannot eavesdrop on calls or pinpoint the locations of cellphones, because there is no reception underground. In fact, the metro makes extensive use of landline phones, which are much less exposed to Gaza residents recruited by Israel to gather intel.[[477]](#footnote-477)

At the same time, Hamas worked to develop attack tunnels into Israeli territory. These tunnels were dug from the Gaza Strip, crossed the perimeter fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel, and opened up onto Israeli soil. Hamas successfully operated such tunnels in the summer of 2014 during Operation Protective Edge, until a significant portion of these tunnels were exposed by Israel in the second part of the operation. Since then, Hamas has continued to attempt the construction of additional attack tunnels in order to cross over to the Israeli side, take the Israeli security services by surprise, and attack civilian settlements – actions prioritized by Hamas.

Israel chose to deal with the underground threat in a way that Hamas did not expect. On the night of May 13 and every night thereafter, Israel systematically attacked the underground tunnel network, each time focusing on a different area within the Gaza Strip so as to render many dozens of kilometers of tunnels inoperable. In total, Israel damaged more than 100 kilometers of Hamas’s metro.[[478]](#footnote-478) It is estimated that Hamas was shocked by the depth of Israel’s intelligence penetration and close familiarity with the tunnel infrastructure.

The first night of the attack entailed an Israeli ruse. During the 24 hours preceding the attack, the IDF deployed large numbers of forces along the northern border of the Gaza Strip as part of a deception operation.[[479]](#footnote-479) The sense that war was imminent, alongside an intentionally misleading message disseminated by the IDF Spokesperson hinting that the IDF had entered the Gaza Strip with ground forces,[[480]](#footnote-480) caused many inhabitants in the region to leave their homes and many Hamas operatives – or so the IDF thought at first – to enter the metro. Then the signal was given. With the boom of unprecedented heavy artillery, hundreds of bombs were dropped on the region, leading to the obliteration of a large part of the underground system in the area and the deaths of some Hamas operatives hiding there.[[481]](#footnote-481)

At first, Israel thought Hamas had been more or less surprised by the attack on the metro and that the ruse had worked as planned, resulting in harm to many Hamas operatives in accordance with the original plan. Eventually, however, it emerged that the plan had not been as brilliant as Israel thought, and that the achievements were relatively minor. It became clear that the original plan for deception involved the actual entry of ground forces so as to bolster the authenticity of the ruse, as well as the entrance of many more Hamas operatives into the metro. However, no ground offensive was executed, and only a few dozen Hamas members were in tunnels at the time of the attack. The plan’s botched execution, which made it possible for Hamas to see through the plan and reduce harm to its personnel, met with criticism. As a rebuttal, the IDF claimed that this outcome was the maximum that could have been achieved, given that previous attacks had already demonstrated Israel’s intentions. Therefore, there was no choice but to execute the plan in a more limited format.[[482]](#footnote-482)

Notably, the fact that Hamas preemptively understood Israel’s intention to attack the metro could, according to the organization, be partly attributed to external entities. Immediately after the operation, on May 28, 2021, Ibrahim al-Amin, the chief editor of *al-Akhbar*, a Lebanese medium identified with Hizballah, announced that during the operation, a joint ops room of Hamas and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps had been established to share information and coordinate anti-Israel actions.[[483]](#footnote-483) On July 8, 2021, Hizballah Director-General Na’im Qassem detailed the assistance provided by Hizballah to Hamas during the operation: coordinating activities on an ongoing basis and sharing with Hamas the information possessed by Hizballah about the IDF’s capabilities, plans, and movements. Qassem claimed that Hizballah had advance intelligence about Israel’s plan to attack the metro, which helped Hamas prepare and protect its personnel.[[484]](#footnote-484) It may be that what helped Hamas identify the first attack on the metro ahead of time was the earlier attack on Hamas operatives who had gone into the underground spaces. Another possibility is that Hamas, perhaps with Hizballah’s help, overheard a conversation accidentally carried out on an open telephone line in which an IDF officer said that he opening the gate as part of the ruse because no troops were expected to arrive.[[485]](#footnote-485) Either way, it seems that while Hamas was surprised that Israel had discovered so much about its underground system, at a crucial juncture it managed to discover signs of the imminent attack. In this way, Hamas succeeded in significantly reducing harm to its personnel, even if the attack caused major damage to the tunnel system it had spent years building.

**Hamas’s View of Israel as Enemy**

To complete the discussion about Hamas’s capabilities in assessing the way in which Israel operates, it is critical to analyze Hamas’s perception and ‘enemy image’ of Israel. A group’s perception of its adversary determines its interpretation of the latter’s actions and declarations. Any analysis of the adversary’s intentions and any assessment of its current situation and its future steps depend on this interpretation, as does the decision-making process of political leaders.[[486]](#footnote-486)

Even the Hamas Covenant, published soon after the organization’s establishment in 1988, shows some basic components of Hamas’s view of Israel, based largely on Islamic sources. It also reflects the importance Hamas attributes to an analysis of Israel and Jews. Article 16, devoted to educating future generations, states: “It is necessary to closely study the enemy and his material and human capabilities, to become familiar with his weaknesses and strengths, to recognize the powers that assist and support him.”[[487]](#footnote-487)

In the covenant, one can identify two major components of Hamas’s perception of Israel. In continuation of several antisemitic claims about Jews in general, the covenant depicts Israel as aggressive and warmongering. Israel satisfies its bloodlust through the attainment of material resources; it uses these resources to control public opinion and harness international forces to fulfill its goals. According to Hamas, this phenomenon reaches as far back as the 1917 Balfour Declaration, and later manifested in the removal of Arab nations from the circle of conflict, such as Egypt after the Camp David Accords in the late 1970s.[[488]](#footnote-488)

By contrast, Israeli society is deeply divided. It surrounds itself with fortifications and defenses, but in practice it is incapable of unity. Externally, it is cohesive, but within there is hostility and disagreement leading to hatred. This assessment is borrowed from the Quran (14:59): “They will not fight you (even) together, except in fortified townships, or from behind walls. Strong is their fighting (spirit) amongst themselves. Thou wouldst think they were united, but their hearts are divided: That is because they are a people devoid of wisdom.”[[489]](#footnote-489)

An expression of this view may also be found in statements made by Shaikh Ahmad Yassin, the organization’s founder. In an interview in August 2000, Yassin presented his theory that what was happening on the political scene in Israel reflected the fraudulent, deceptive nature of the Jews. He cited the same Quran verse quoted in the Hamas Covenant as proof. As far as he was concerned, this deception proved that Jews were “snakes”:

When you see them united, know that the only thing that holds them together is personal interests. Nothing else ever succeeds. We know that the State of Israel is not united and never will be. What unites them is fear for their lives. Should this fear disappear, each one will go his own way. All the Jewish-Israeli political parties are different sides of the same coin. The left, for example, says there is no God, and the right goes to pray at the Western Wall and says that God regrets [having created the sons of Ishmael].[[490]](#footnote-490)

More about Hamas’s perception of Israel can be learned from the view of Shaikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the preeminent Islamic clerics and scholars of our day, whom Hamas views as its supreme spiritual and religious authority.[[491]](#footnote-491) al-Qaradawi also emphasizes the importance of knowing the enemy and considers it a religious and national obligation. To that end, he sees a direct link between Jewish culture and mentality, on the one hand, and Zionism and Israel, on the other. While Israel, he says, invests heavily in the study of its enemies, Muslims fighting Israel do not take up this crucial mission, and therefore their understanding of Israeli and Jewish psychology is lacking. To examine what he considers Jewish-Zionist psychology, al-Qaradawi refers to several sources: the Hebrew Bible, the Quran, rabbinic literature, and key Zionist thinkers.[[492]](#footnote-492) He also maintains that Israeli society is aggressive and militaristic, and constantly strives for war with the Muslims of Palestine. This view became one of al-Qaradawi’s main explanations for the religious permission to kill Israeli civilians, because they are partners in the war effort.[[493]](#footnote-493)

Nonetheless, al-Qaradawi’s perception of Israel’s capabilities and resilience is complicated. On the one hand, he describes Jews as people who abandoned God; for this reason, Allah cursed their hearts and they became as hard as stone, making them indiscriminately violent. As a blatant example of the hardheartedness embedded in the Jews, al-Qaradawi points to former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, whom he calls “the philosopher of violence.” The Jews’ adulation of “warrior-prophets,” such as Moses and Joshua, is also a symbol of the violence inherent in Jews.[[494]](#footnote-494)

On the other hand, al-Qaradawi emphasizes several important characteristics that have proven advantageous to Israel. The first is the fact that the Zionist movement, and eventually the State of Israel, operated and still operates on the basis of an orderly, planned program to attain its goals. Over the years, Israel has managed to build a united society despite its considerable internal differences and diversity – for instance, Ashkenazi Jews versus Mizrahi Jews, or religious versus secular – and has successfully assimilated immigrants from vastly different cultures, such as the Russian and Ethiopian waves of immigration. Israel’s unity in practice is the secret to Israel’s strength, says al-Qaradawi. Another Israeli strength is the nation’s democratic form of government, which makes it possible for the country’s various populations to coexist. These three strengths are especially evident in comparison with the Arabs, who are not united and do not leverage their might to set in motion an orderly program for the fulfillment of their goals. These strengths are further amplified by Israel’s technological strength. al-Qaradawi stresses that Israel, unlike the Arab and Muslim nations, was wise enough to develop the advanced army and weapons that allowed it to realize its goals.[[495]](#footnote-495)

The surprising part about al-Qaradawi’s approach, relevant to this discussion, is the insight that the Jews have managed to change the traditional characteristics attributed to them by Islamic sources. According to al-Qaradawi, in fulfilling the Zionist project, the Jews succeeded in overcoming several deep-seated and unfortunate features. For example, the Quran describes Jews as afraid for their lives, and says that they fight from behind walls and fortifications because of their fear of death. al-Qaradawi maintains that the Jews have overcome their fundamental cowardice and no longer let it dictate their conduct. On the contrary, cowardice has become more identified with Arabs than with Jews.[[496]](#footnote-496)

Another weakness overcome by the Jews, in al-Qaradawi’s telling, is their fundamental lack of belief. While al-Qaradawi recognizes that many contemporary Jews are secular, including Israel’s leadership, he nonetheless identifies how Jews used the foundations of the Jewish faith to bring Jews to the land in the early days of Zionism and continue to use these principles to unite Jews across the globe. Here, too, he contrasts the strength of Jewish belief with what he calls its absence among Muslims.[[497]](#footnote-497)

Thus, al-Qaradawi’s philosophy presents a basically complex view of Israel. On the one hand, it highlights and discusses the purported negative traits of Jews and Israel: weak, cowardly, devoid of faith or willingness to sacrifice. On the other hand, it characterizes Israel’s mode of operation as quite the opposite – which enabled the Zionist movement to establish the state and allows it to exist and flourish to this day.

This complex message can be found among other key Hamas personnel. Over the years, Ghazi Hamad, a senior Hamas operative who served in various official positions in the organization, including as deputy foreign minister and spokesman, has presented a nuanced picture of Israel similar to that of al-Qaradawi. In an essay published in July 2009, about six months after Operation Cast Lead, he takes a firm stance, declaring that the Palestinians will be able to best Israel only once they acknowledge Israel’s strengths. His argument presents Israel as a nation with significant material and intelligence assets and international support, capable of facing many challenges through a consistent strategy that no political party in Israel opposes, despite their differences of opinion on other subjects. Israel’s strength, he claims, comes from the fact that it is willing to admit its mistakes and engage in thorough investigations of failures; this allows the nation to learn from its errors for the sake of future success.[[498]](#footnote-498) In another essay from 2014, Hamad describes Israel as an entity operating on the basis of a coherent strategy that it brings to fruition through perseverance; this includes frittering away negotiations with the Palestinians, continuing settlement activity in the West Bank, acquiring Palestinian lands, and enforcing lockdowns on Palestinian areas. By contrast, he says, the Palestinians busy themselves with tactical aspects of the conflict but have no organized doctrine or strategic outlook.[[499]](#footnote-499)

In a third essay, this time from 2016, Hamad expands on his argument, saying that, in practice, Israel has one of the most powerful weapons arsenals in the Middle East as well as high-level intelligence and security capabilities. In addition, Israel operates an extensive international network to ensure legitimacy for its actions. This fact requires the Palestinians to put aside any delusions and “recalibrate” the way they think about the conflict with Israel and its outcomes. He further claims that Israel is more afraid of day-to-day harm to its people basis than large-scale war, and therefore the Palestinians must choose the former.[[500]](#footnote-500)

Thus, when Hamas makes assessments with regard to Israel, it does so on the basis of a complex understanding of the country. The Quran’s classical view of Jews – as people who abandoned God and were abandoned by God in turn, as heartless cowards with deep internal rifts – tends to tilt the scales toward the assessment that Israel will avoid far-reaching offensive action. By contrast, an understanding of the state’s strengths and of the Jewish people as an entity that manages to maintain a strong society against all odds, coupled with what Hamad sees as the Jews’ intrinsic tendency toward violence, tends to suggest that Israel will take far-reaching offensive action. This theoretical ambivalence may be another reason for Hamas’s difficulty in correctly assessing Israel’s intentions throughout the years of conflict.

**Conclusion**

Hamas’s intelligence activity no longer focuses on specific tactical needs for attacks on IDF soldiers and Israeli citizens. Gradually, and especially after Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip – a move that completely changed the nature of the conflict – the organization began to work extensively in the operational field to focus on how Israel would act if and when a large-scale operation was to be carried out against the Gaza Strip. This includes analyzing the army’s operational plans, its potential routes through the area, and so forth. To do so, it has based itself mostly on an examination of the conflict's history, the features of the terrain, and various relevant open-source publications. In addition, Hamas has devoted comprehensive and consistent study to Israel and the IDF; it has ensured that the organization as a whole and its operatives as individuals achieve profound familiarity with the IDF’s activities, units, weapons, and deployment in all sectors, especially near the Gaza Strip.

At the same time, Hamas has also begun to operate on a strategic level – first and foremost, attempting to assess the possibility that Israel would embark on a large-scale operation against the organization. Such assessments are informed by analyses of the political situation in Israel, Israeli public opinion, and Israel’s foreign relations, as well as statements by senior Israeli sources. These analyses are coupled with the organization’s fundamental and complex worldviews: the Quran’s image of Jews as lacking in resilience and a high level of motivation to fight against its enemies, a view that is at odds with the military might of Israel, the Jewish state, and the fact that Israel has not only managed to gain a toehold in the region but in fact developed into a flourishing society.

In the absence of intimate, high-quality sources of information about Israel’s decision-making processes, Hamas is, for its strategic assessments, forced to rely on geopolitical analyses and OSINT, especially in Israel’s mass media. This has led the organization to make several notable errors in its strategic assessment and may point to one of the most significant challenges faced by VNSAs in the field of operational intelligence.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The research in this book represents the first ever description of Hamas’s intelligence activity in its longstanding struggle against Israel from the 1980s to the present day. The analysis herein allows us to arrive at several important conclusions from various perspectives, both about the history of the Hamas-Israel conflict and, more broadly, about the function of intelligence in asymmetrical confrontations between states and violent non-state actors (VNSAs), including terrorist organizations.

The most fundamental conclusion of the research is the very existence of a continuous battle for intelligence between Hamas, a non-state entity, and the State of Israel. We have demonstrated how the organization has operated to gather intelligence since its inception, making clever use of the methods made possible by the nature of its activity, and has deployed this intelligence for its own ends. At the same time, it has also engaged in extensive counterintelligence measures to limit Israel’s intelligence activity within Hamas. The academic and security discourse has focused on intelligence campaigns between nations or on the challenges faced by nations in terms of intelligence when operating against terrorist organizations as VNSAs, taking an essentially unilateral view of such conflicts. This study makes it clear that there is an asymmetrical but mutual intelligence campaign between states and VNSAs, in which the latter intelligence activity representing the weaker side is of great significance and critically affects the way the struggle unfolds.

In general, we may distinguish the four major and interdependent factors that have had the most impact on the development of intelligence in Hamas: change within the organization itself; changes in the nature of the conflict and the organization’s areas of interest; the development of the weaponry used by the organization; and general technological advances. First, with regard to the organizational aspect, Hamas transitioned from single, isolated cells to a more orderly and regulated model of operations, and ultimately to the establishment of systematic quasi-military arrangements. This change led the organization to gradually adopt more structured patterns of conduct in all areas, including intelligence; thus, the gathering of intelligence became more comprehensive and professional, as did analysis and processing of intelligence and counterintelligence.

Secondly, at the same time, the nature of the conflict between Israel and the various terror groups grew more organized. When Israel maintained a presence in the Gaza Strip, the conflict was tactical in nature, as were Hamas’s intelligence needs. As Israel withdrew and the organization seized control, the warring sides were now on different sides of the border; this altered the nature of the confrontation, forcing Hamas to prepare for a large-scale clash with Israel and assess the probability of such a clash. Therefore, Hamas had no choice but to expand its intelligence collection and analysis to include operational and strategic intelligence. Furthermore, having seized control of the territory, the organization was now in a position to set up structures, such as forward observation posts, throughout the Gaza Strip. The effect of this new reality on Gaza is evident in comparison with the situation in the West Bank, where Hamas’s modus operandi stayed the same. Therefore, its intelligence activities failed to develop, and to this day are executed in virtually the same way that they were in the 1990s.

Thirdly, in tandem with these changes, Hamas’s weapons also became more sophisticated. At the start, the organization primarily made use of IEDs and gunfire, meaning that the intelligence needed to operate these weapons was primarily tactical and geographically adjacent to the organization’s centers of operation. With time, Hamas developed a rocket arsenal to fire at Israel’s home front. This also meant a gradual transition of its intelligence-gathering efforts to strategic targets within Israel, as well as the expansion of its data collection range to keep apace with the ever-growing range of its rockets. The need to gather intelligence deep inside Israel required adjustments to the organization’s collection methods, such as running agents and developing cyber capabilities.

Fourthly, in the field of cyber, as well as in other fields, one can see the impact of global technological developments on Hamas’s intelligence activities. Lacking a nation’s capacities for extensive, independent technological development, Hamas makes substantial use of technologies that were once reserved only for states but have become increasingly available to the public at large, such as UAVs, cyberhacking, and the recruitment of agents through social media. These technologies, which enabled Hamas to operate more effectively and were swiftly integrated into its intelligence apparatus, and most of which are relatively affordable, significantly improved Hamas’s intelligence capacities and the quality of the intelligence gathered by the organization.

There is a palpable difference in Hamas’s intelligence activity in the two phases of its existence: before the mid-2000s, when it was a terror organization acting in cells and engaging only in tactical activity, and from the mid-2000s until the present, when the organization began to operate as an institution and even controlled territory. This difference is evident both in the organization’s construction of power and its use of power. The following table shows Hamas’s methods for the gathering and employment of intelligence in the two main phases and timeframes.

***Comparison of Hamas’s Intelligence Efforts Before and After the Mid-2000s***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Field**  **Period** | **GEOINT** | **HUMINT** | **OSINT** | **SIGINT & Cyberwarfare** | **Intelligence Requirements** |
| **Before the Mid-2000s** | Ad hoc observations at close range | Local, short-term, and basic recruitment and handling | Sporadic collection, mostly for local needs | Sporadic interception for tactical purposes | Tactical |
| **After the Mid-2000s** | Institutional and methodical system of observations, including the use of advanced observation systems and UAVs | Global and long-term recruitment and handling, including in cyberspace, aimed at extensive collection of intelligence | Extensive, systematic, and comprehensive intelligence gathering from diverse sources and on a variety of topics | Institutional interception, extensive information-gathering activity in cyberspace | Tactical, operational, and strategic |

This development is also evident in the construction of the organization’s intelligence force:

***Comparison of Hamas’s Construction of an Intelligence Force Before and After the Mid-2000s***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Aspect of**  **Force**  **Period** | **Structure and Organization** | **Manpower** | **Training** | **Means** | **TTP (Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures)** |
| **Before the Mid-2000s** | No intelligence apparatuses (with the exception of al-Majd’s counterintelligence efforts against collaborators) | Cell operatives handled the collection of intelligence | No intelligence training for operatives | Simple, basic tools | No orderly methods of operation |
| **After the Mid-2000s** | Institutional and organized intelligence entities | Designated and professionally trained intelligence agents | Professional training and knowledge for operatives charged with dealing with intelligence | Advanced technologies (mostly commercially based with some adaptations) | More methodical and orderly processes |

The differences between the two periods are striking; they demonstrate that intelligence has become an integral element of Hamas’s overall activity. Any change or development in the organization’s operations affects and is affected by its intelligence.

On the whole, Hamas’s intelligence activities against Israel over the organization’s years of existence have led to palpable achievements. Hamas has learned to deploy diverse methods for collecting a range of data at the tactical and operational levels, which indicates continuous learning, creativity, and desire to act in every possible channel to attain information that will contribute to the organization’s activities. This has helped the organization to gain significant, valuable intelligence that has led to considerable operational successes. As evidenced by the chart, until the mid-2000s, there was not a significant intelligence component included in each one of the organization’s tactical operations. Still, in many dozens of attacks – some carried out by more sophisticated cells run by the organization, e.g., the Silwan cell – the intelligence aspect was instrumental to their ability to execute “high-quality” actions.

Strategically, however, it is obvious that Hamas lacked access to the closely guarded intelligence of Israel’s decision-makers. To reach the small circle in which Israel’s strategic decisions are made would require highly advanced intelligence capabilities that Hamas, as a non-state entity, does not yet possess. Therefore, Hamas’s assessments of Israel at the strategic level are based on a combination of the organization’s fundamental assumptions about Israel and Jewish society, lessons learned from experience, and OSINT collection. This has hampered the organization a number of times throughout the conflict and caused it to misread the strategic map, so that Hamas has been left vulnerable to surprise and suffered severe blows.

In this context, two points are worth noting: Firstly, as we know, strategic assessment of an enemy’s expected action is extremely difficult for any intelligence organization, especially when it comes to a future decision or a development about which there is no real intelligence. Thus, the limitations faced by Hamas in assessing strategic intelligence are compounded by the inherent difficulty of this type of intelligence work. Secondly, looking into the future, we see that Hamas makes extensive use of cyberspace for diverse intelligence needs. This dimension may gradually allow Hamas to obtain information on the strategic level and even approach the core of Israel’s state secrets, thus enriching the knowledge base it uses when making strategic assessments about Israel.

With regard to cyberspace, it should be stated that, for Hamas, this dimension solves an essential problem in terms of its operations. Since Israel’s disengagement from Gaza in 2005, and all the more since Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the Gaza Strip has been almost hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world. While the organization has occasionally managed to establish contact with the world outside of Gaza, such as through the smuggling tunnels or through Hamas operatives overseas, Gaza’s isolation has largely made it very difficult for Hamas to construct and operate a force in the field of intelligence. Cyberspace, however, where geography serves as no constraint and physical borders are irrelevant, is ideal for the organization and for activities in which it would otherwise be unable to engage. The ability to operate from within the Gaza Strip in relation to every other location around the globe through the internet also allows Hamas to operate intelligence at low risk and with a high survival rate.

An essential point in understanding Hamas’s intelligence campaign against Israel is the asymmetrical nature of the confrontation: The scope and capabilities of Israel’s intelligence are significantly larger than those of Hamas. Therefore, since its inception, Hamas has concentrated on concealment and counterintelligence. Terrorist organizations survive only if they can operate in secret, a fact understood by Hamas from the outset. Without a doubt, the quantitative and qualitative advantage of Israel’s intelligence has often overtaken Hamas’s ability to remain clandestine, but in many cases the organization has successfully and productively used effective concealment to keep Israeli intelligence services from attaining closely guarded organizational intelligence. This was evident in Hamas’s ability to prevent Israel from accessing the abducted soldier Gilad Shalit throughout his years of captivity, an operation that culminated in a spectacular achievement for the organization – a prisoner swap that freed more than 1,000 Palestinian inmates from Israeli prisons. In this field, there is abundant evidence that Hamas continuously studies and tracks Israel’s intelligence capabilities and methods of operation, formulating lessons from every incident in which organizational ranks are breached. Similarly, in some cases, security breaches have been creatively exploited to turn risks into opportunities, such as doubling exposed agents and using them against Israel.

The asymmetry of the intelligence warfare is obvious merely from the fact that Israel has state power while Hamas is a non-state organization. However, it is also evident in the difference between the nature of Israel’s regime and society compared to the Gaza Strip, and in the IDF’s organized and institutionalized operations compared to those of Hamas. Here, the asymmetry is flipped. Hamas takes maximal advantage of the fact that its enemy, Israel, is a state – in particular, one with a democratic regime. As it is the army of a state, the IDF maintains an orderly, organized manner of operations, based on relatively fixed procedures and protocols. This makes it possible to map its activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and identify weaknesses that can be exploited to attack both civilians and soldiers. Moreover, because Israel is a democracy, the freedom of the press enjoyed by Israel’s mass media, even on military and security matters, has made it possible for Hamas to cheaply and easily attain highly valuable OSINT about Israel and the army, from tactical to strategic intelligence matters. The freedom and openness of Israeli society means that soldiers can easily be accessed through social media platforms, and that normally closed army bases may be penetrated through soldiers’ smartphones. Hamas has also exploited Israel’s democratic nature by hiding behind civilian facades to lend a veneer of innocence to its activities, a prominent characteristic in its conduct in general and in the field of intelligence; the organization knows that Israel’s hands are legally and morally tied, as Israel will find it hard to impede any efforts made under a civilian or humanitarian guise.

Another aspect related to the asymmetrical nature of the fighting is Hamas’s occasional use of intelligence activity for propaganda and psychological warfare. When the organization finds it convenient and can do so without revealing confidential information, it has, over the years, circulated details of its intelligence activities and findings in its own media. Hamas made public incidents of Israeli agents it had managed to double and UAVs it operated, and revealed examples of Israeli intelligence exposed by Hamas counterintelligence bodies. Some of these were edited and produced at a sophisticated level for external consumption. The target audience of these messages is twofold: They are first and foremost aimed at Palestinian society as part of Hamas’s public-facing propaganda, meant to present the organization as equal to Israel’s fabled intelligence services. At the same time, they are also aimed at Israel and the IDF as part of Hamas’s psychological warfare, to undermine Israel’s trust in its intelligence services and their superiority.

This research raises the crucial obligation of nations facing VNSAs, especially terrorist organizations, to take into account the intelligence threat they face from these actors, both in their situation assessments and in their counterintelligence efforts. Furthermore, they must also consider all platforms and alternatives for actively confronting hostile intelligence operations. Proof of Hamas’s development in the field of intelligence and its ramifications may be found in the fact that Israel has recognized the threat, at least in part; this recognition has affected how Israel operates, both in countering threats and in taking advantage of opportunities. Examples of the latter include misdirection in response to Hamas’s intelligence collection efforts, which Israel has succeeded in pulling off several times, as well as attacks carried out by Israel to destroy physical infrastructures and thwart the organization’s cyber operatives.

Moreover, the maintenance of superior intelligence is critical for nations to realize their advantage and reduce the threat they face from VNSAs. Hence, nations must carefully study the counterintelligence efforts of VNSAs; these comprise not only passive security and concealment but also more sophisticated, active efforts, such as doubling agents and deception. All this must be weighed while conducting an intelligence campaign.

This study shows that a full analysis of VNSAs in general, and terrorist organizations in particular, requires a substantial focus on the intelligence component of their activity. These organizations incorporate intelligence – albeit perhaps less institutionalized or organized than is common among nations – into their activity on various levels, tactical and operational, and draw on this intelligence in making strategic decisions as well. These organizations manage to attain successes in the field of intelligence that may serve them as VNSAs in asymmetrical campaigns. Of course, this is not to ignore the gap in existing intelligence capabilities; however, as is always true in such confrontations, the absence of a defeat in a campaign is the same as victory for the weaker side. One must not devalue the importance of the intelligence successes achieved by organizations of this kind, both in terms of collecting and exposing the state’s intel and in terms of circumventing its efforts to expose their secrets.

The present era is often called the “information age”: an epoch in which information is of utmost importance, as is the ability to attain, organize, and process it. Therefore, intelligence has been and will continue to be crucial to the success of any organization that wishes to survive and to achieve its goals. Hamas’s intelligence campaign against Israel, as presented here, clearly demonstrates that an extensive, comprehensive war of intelligence exists mutually in every conflict – even among VNSAs, in accordance with the nature of their activity. The intelligence efforts of VNSAs should not be viewed on the same scale of absolute values as those of states, because obviously they do not reach the latter in impact and quality. Nonetheless, it behooves us to consider whether the intelligence operated by a VNSA – despite its limitations – serves the actor’s goals. The story of Hamas’s intelligence warfare against Israel presented in this book demonstrates that, in this case, the question may be answered in the affirmative.

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79. *Military Prosecution v. Muhammad Jabbar Oudeh 'Harub*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Military Prosecution v. Muhammad Jabbar Oudeh 'Harub*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. West Bank 3219/15, *Military Prosecution v. Yahiya Muhammad Na'if Abduallah Haj Hamed*, 3 (published in *Pador*, June 22, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
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83. High Court of Justice 4597/14, *Muhammad Hassal Khalil 'Awaoudeh et al. v. IDF West Bank Troop Commander*, 3 (published in *Pador*, July 1, 2014); West Bank 4935/14, *Military Prosecution v. 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam Zi'ad Hassan 'Awad*, 2 (published in *Nevo*, July 2, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
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85. Tamer al-Mish'al, “Ma Khafi A'zam – Muhammad al-Zuary, Taiyyar al-Muqawama*,*” al-Jazeera Channel, April 30, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. al-Mish'al, “Ma Khafi A'zam.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. al-Mish'al, “Ma Khafi A'zam.” [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. al-Misha'l, “Ma Khafi A'zam.” [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Da'irat al-I'lam al-'Askari – Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, “Ta'irat Ababil 1 A1A,” *al-Qassam*, July 15, 2014, <https://alqassam.ps/arabic/videos/index/621>; Da'irat al-I'lam al-'askari – Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, “Ta'irat ababil 1 A1B,” *al-Qassam*, July 14, 2014, <https://alqassam.ps/arabic/videos/index/618>; Da'irat al-I'lam al-'askari – Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, “Ta'irat ababyl 1 A1c al-Intihariyya,” *al-Qassam*, July 14, 2014. <https://alqassam.ps/arabic/videos/index/619> [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Muhammad al-Najar, “Ta'irat al-Qassam. Tatawwur Naw'i bi-l-Harb ma' Isra'il,” *al-Jazeera,* July 15, 2014. Ganem Ibrahim and Yaron Schneider, “Mazla't shel ḥamas bishmei tel aviv? ‘Raiti mashehu meofef,’” *N12*, July 14, 2014, <https://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/local/Article-1c5b3296f743741004.htm>; “Ḥamas meẓig: tmunot rishonot mehamazlat,” *N12*, December 15, 2014. <https://www.mako.co.il//news-military/security/Article-d701d38a82d4a41004.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Yanir Yenga, “Mazla't sheḥadar meazah leyisrael hitrasek bagvul. Divuaḥ: shayakh leḥamas,’” *Walla*, June 25, 2015, <https://news.walla.co.il/item/2867128>; Yossi Yehoshua, “Mazla't shel ḥamas yorat bareẓuah”, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, September 20, 2016, <https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4857572,00.html>; Amir Bouhbout, “Ḥeyl heavir yiret klei tayis lo meuyash shel ḥamas shehigia meazah,” *Walla*, February 23, 2017. <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3043260> [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. For further discussion of these activities, see Chapter 4 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Basil Salahiyyah, “al-Fidiu al-Asli, Anfaq Isra'iliyyah bi-Itijat Ghaza, Basil Salahiyyah al-Fidiu al-Kamil,” Youtube, January 7, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-SUrBBK8II> [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. The source reads April 2004, but the event makes it clear that this was a typographical error. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Miscellaneous Requests 2942/05, *State of Israel v. Nazmi Ibn Azz al-Adin Hussein*, 2–3 (published in *Pador*, November 24, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *State of Israel v. Nazmi Ibn Azz al-Adin Hussein*, 3–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Criminal 318/03, *State of Israel v. Ibn Salim Shala'tah*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, April 13, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Miscellaneous Requests 4208/04, *Khadir Shala'tah et al. v. State of Israel*, 2, 4 (published in *Pador*, July 28, 2004); Criminal 318/03, *State of Israel v. Khadir Ibn Salim Shala'tah*, 2–3 (published in *Pador*, April 13, 2005); Criminal Appeal 4187/05, *Rami Hiadri v. State of Israel*, 1 (published in *Pador*, October 26, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Criminal Appeal 95/03, *'Abd al-Allah Ma'lwani v. State of Israel*, 2–3 (published in Pador, March 11, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Sentencing Appeal (West Bank) 2067/05, *Baker Muhammad Baker Shaikhah v. Military Prosecution*, 1 (published in *Pador*, July 21, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Miscellaneous Requests 4103/04, *State of Israel v. Basil Ibn Yusuf Mahajnah*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, July 13, 2004); Serious Crimes 1048/04, *State of Israel v. Basil Mahajnah*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, February 21, 2005); Criminal Appeal 3289/05, *Basil Mahajnah v. State of Israel*, 1 (published in *Pador*, October 10, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Serious Crimes 1076/04, *State of Israel v. Zahir Ibn Yusuf Dhihab 'Ali*, 1–2, 4–5 (published in *Pador*, June 22, 2005); Criminal Appeal 7429/05, *John Doe v. State of Israel*, 1 (published in *Pador*, June 14, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Serious Crimes 1076/04, *State of Israel v. Zahir Ibn Yusuf Dhihab 'Ali*, 2–3. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *State of Israel v. Zahir Ibn Yusuf Dhihab 'Ali*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Criminal Miscellaneous Requests 5828/06, *Lui Abu Dalu v. State of Israel*, 1 (published in *Pador*, July 30, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Criminal Case 27905/11, *State of Israel v. I'ad Rashid Abu 'Arjah*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, January 5, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. *State of Israel v. I'ad Rashid Abu 'Arjah*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. *State of Israel v. I'ad Rashid Abu 'Arjah*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Serious Criminal Case 312/10, *State of Israel v. Murad Kamal*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, January 31, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. *State of Israel v. Murad Kamal*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. The name of the Hamas student cell at various universities. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Serious Criminal Case 27112/10, *State of Israel v. Islam Mar'i*, 2–3 (published in *Pador*, May 19, 2011); Criminal Appeal 4907/11, *Islam Mar'i v. State of Israel*, 2 (published in *Pador*, November 14, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim,* 77; Yaakov Sabag, *Zikhronot Abu Yusuf* (Ashkelon: Sela Meir, 2018), 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Miscellaneous Criminal Request 7562/17, *State of Israel v. Muhammad Halabi*, 2 (published in *Pador*, November 22, 2017); “Hugash ktav ishum neged muḥamad ḥalabi begin aveirot mimun teror veaveirot ḥaveirut bairgun teror ubahitaḥdut bilti muteret,” *Israel Money Laundering and Terror Financing Prohibition Authority*, August 30, 2016. <https://www.justice.gov.il/Units/HalbantHon/News/Pages/TerroristFinancingIndictment280816.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Yossi Melman, “Menahel irgun humanitari heevir aserot milionei dolarim leḥamas al ḥeshbon yaldei azah,” *Maariv Online*, August 4, 2016. <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/military/Article-552159> [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. “Neeẓar muḥamad ḥalabi, menahel snif reẓuati shel irgun ha-WORLD VISION, asher paal avor hazroa haẓvait shel ḥamas,” *Israel General Security Service*, August 3, 2016. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/Newitem100816.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Serious Criminal Case 11230/12, *State of Israel v. Muhammad As'ad*, 3 (published in *Pador*, March 6, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Based on the particulars of the indictment published in: Yael Friedson, “Ktav ishum begin rigul neged neesham beisuf meida avor peil ḥamas,” *Ynet*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5505102,00.html>; “Toshav mizraḥ yerushalaim muasham berigul,” *Mako*, May 6, 2019. <https://www.mako.co.il/news-law/legal-q2_2019/Article-50c711644dc8a61027.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Based on information submitted by the IDF and published, inter alia, in: Yoav Zeitun, “Hamodiin beḥamas poneh leloḥamei ẓahal bewatsap: ma nishma aḥi, yesh'kh et haluz?” *Ynet*, July 14, 2019, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5550055,00.html>; Hanan Greenwald, “Peilei teror nisu lehasig meida mesuvag meḥayalim,” *Israel Hayom*, July 14, 2019. <https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/674013> [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Detention until the End of Proceedings 19-02-18951, *State of Israel v. Hussain Huari (Detention)*, 1–2, 4–5 (published in *Nevo*, March 26, 2019). It is unclear if the reference is to the Information Office or to another communications-related unit. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. According to the particulars of the indictment, published in several outlets, including: Gilad Morag and Yoav Zeitun, “Ishum: Ḥamas giyes shnei sokhnim yisraelim metel aviv umelod,” *Ynet*, January 27, 2020, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5667215,00.html>; Carmela Menasheh and Ẓaḥ Shpitsman, “Shabak ḥasaf peilut rigul shel ḥamas beshetaḥ yisrael,” *Kan*, January 27, 2020. <https://www.kan.org.il/item/?itemid=65652> [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Menasheh and Shpitsman, “Shabak ḥasaf.” [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. *State of Israel via the Southern District Prosecutor against Mahmud Ibn Hamias Miqdad et al, - indictment*, September 7, 2020, 1–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Indictment against Mahmud Ibn Hamias Miqdad et al., 4–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. “Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: Human Rights Abuses and Violations,” *B’Tselem,* January 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. *Mithaq Hamas*, Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyyah, 1988 (printed edition from 2004), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Sabag, *Zikhronot abu yusuf*, 2018, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. al-Shahidi al-Qassami/Maher Abu Srur, *Al-Qassam.net*, n.d. <https://alqassam.net/arabic/martyrs/details/1488>; Aviad, *Leksikon ḥamas*, 47–48; Perry, *Haba lehorgekha*, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Roni Shaked, “Hunt for three terrorists who murdered Shin Bet officer,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 14, 1994, 2; Perry, *Haba lehorgekha*, 235–236. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. “al-Ḥalqa (1): Ṣa'ad al-shabak yakshif 'an 'amaliyat ightiyal Cohen,” *Al-Qassam.net*, October 30, 2011, <https://alqassam.net/arabic/news/details/3819>. Testimony submitted by Meir Ehrenfeld, Cohen’s bodyguard, who was with him in the car and was injured in the attack. Cited by Ẓiki Yishai, “Noam lo sarad et hamarav leanshei hashabak,” *N12*, February 17, 2018,

     <https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/security-q2_2018/Article-4b8964014e4d261004.htm>; Aviad, *Leksikon ḥamas*, 36–37, 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. “al-Ḥalqa (1): Ṣa'ad”; “Bi-l-fidiyo ightiyal Cohen intisar li-l-qassam fi ṣira' al-admighha,” *Al-Qassam.net*, February 13, 2020, <https://alqassam.net/arabic/news/details/15826>; Perry, *Haba lehorgekha*, 236–237. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. “al-Ḥalqa (2): al-mujahidun yunaffidhun al-khutta wa-yaghtalu ḍabit al-shabak,” *Al-Qassam.net*, November 2011, <https://www.alqassam.ps/arabic/news1.php?id=24619>; “al-Ḥalqa (3): Istishihad wa-'iqtiyal ba'ad iṣṭayyid ḍabit al-shabak,” *Al-Qassam.net*, November 10, 2011, <https://www.alqassam.ps/arabic/news/details/3883>. A summary of the recording is provided by Ẓvi Zinger and David Regev: “Hamas member confesses: I killed the Shin Bet officer” (Hebrew), *Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 16, 1993, p. 7; Ẓvi Zinger and Roni Shaked, “Hamas Agent Leads Shin Bet Officers into Ambush” (Hebrew), *Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 15, 1994, p. 1; Shaked, “Hunt,” p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. “al-Ḥalqa (3): Istishihad”; Aviad, *Leksikon ḥamas*, 36–37, 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. For more, see an unusually long verdict recording the Palestinian Authority’s abuses against some 60 individuals suspected of collaborating with Israel: Civil File (Jerusalem District Court) 5074-03, *A. G. and 17 Others v. the Palestinian Authority*, April 24, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. See, e.g., Appeal 5340/08, *Sallah Ahmad Sallah Shaikh v. Military Prosecution*, December 29, 2008; HCJ 05/11199, *John Doe v. West Bank Military Commander*, January 1, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. “al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, 'ibda'at Qassamiyyah,’” *Ḥumat al-Thughur*, 1, December 20, 2004, 1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. “'Amaliyyat al-sahm al-thaqib al-amniyyah,” *Al-Qassam.net*, undated. To view the preparations for the operation, the digging of the tunnel, and the planting of the explosives, see the film clip *'Amaliyyat al-sahm al-thaqib*, *al-Qassam* website, May 25, 2008. For details of the action as they emerged during a Hamas press conference, as well as the declaration issued by Hamas after the action, see: “Mutamar al-sahm al-thaqib,” *Al-Qassam* website, May 27, 2008; “Kata'ib tantaṣiru 'ala mukhabarat al-ṣahyuniyya fi 'amaliyyat al-sahm al-thaqib al-amniyya al-mu'aqqada wa-ma khafi kan 'aẓam,” *Al-Qassam.net*, December 7, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. The name of the source remains confidential and has never been made public. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Miscellaneous Criminal Requests, 686/09, *State of Israel v. John Doe*, March 1, 2009, 1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Miscellaneous Criminal Requests, 686/09, *State of Israel v. John Doe*, March 1, 2009, 1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Miscellaneous Criminal Requests, 686/09, *State of Israel v. John Doe*, March 1, 2009, 1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. “al-watha'iqi sarab ḍarba 'amniyya li-qiyyadat al-iḥtilal 'ala yad kata'ib al-qassam,” *al-Mayadin*, initially broadcast on December 18, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyRoP1tZ5QQ> [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. “al-watha'iqi sarab ḍarba 'amniyya li-qiyyadat al-iḥtilal 'ala yad kata'ib al-qassam,” *al-Mayadin*, initially broadcast on December 18, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. “al-watha'iqi sarab ḍarba 'amniyya li-qiyyadat al-iḥtilal 'ala yad kata'ib al-qassam,” *al-Mayadin*, initially broadcast on December 18, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. “al-watha'iqi sarab ḍarba 'amniyya li-qiyyadat al-iḥtilal 'ala yad kata'ib al-qassam,” *al-Mayadin*, initially broadcast on December 18, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. “al-watha'iqi sarab ḍarba 'amniyya li-qiyyadat al-iḥtilal 'ala yad kata'ib al-qassam,” *al-Mayadin*, initially broadcast on December 18, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. This analysis of Hamas doubling of sources, with the table below, was first published in Flamer, “‘An Asymmetric Doubling.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Parts of this chapter have been published in Netanel Flamer, " ‘The enemy teaches us how to operate’: Palestinian Hamas use of open source intelligence (OSINT) in its intelligence warfare against Israel (1987-2012), *Intelligence and National Security*, 38, no. 7 (2023): 1171-1188. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Aviva Shabi and Roni Shaked, *Ḥamas: Meemunah bealah lederekh hateror* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1994), 174–175, 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 174–175, 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 53, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Wadi, *Betulat alqassamiya*, 5–7, 11, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Wadi, *Betulat alqassamiya*, 98–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. 'Arman, *Muhandisu almawt*, 13–14, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. 'Arman, *Muhandisu almawt*, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, “I'tarafat Sahayoniyyah bi-al-Fashal amam al-Qassam,” *Humat al-Thughur* 1 (December 20, 2004), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. al-Maktab, “I'tarafat sahayoniyyah bi-al-Fashal amam al-Qassam,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, “I'tarafat sahayoniyyah – Haarits: al-Kyan 'ala Shafa Harb Ahliah bisabab Khutat al-Infisal,” *Humat al-Thughur* 3 (January 13, 2005), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, “Khabar al-'Usbu': Intihar Jundi Sahaiyoni fi Qa'idatihi al-'askariyyah,” *Humat al-Thughur* 3 (January 13, 2005), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Sliman al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui – Mabat meazah* (Tel Aviv: LaMiskal, 2009), 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Da'irat al-Istakhbarat al-'askari fi Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah* 36 (February 18, 2010), back cover. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 2–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 2–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 7–11. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 11–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 13–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, 14–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. *Shu'un Isra'iliyyah*, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Da'irat al-Istakhbarat al-'Askari fi Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, “'Ala Hamish al-Ahdath,” April 7, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Hamas film, untitled (2007), from the author’s archive. The original coverage on Channel 10, including the drone photography, can be seen at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI-j47Ar7kw>. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. al-Shafa'i, *Hashavui*, 184–185. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Da'irat al-Istakhbarat al-'Askari fi Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili* 184 (November 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili* 184 (November 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
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178. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata’ib al-Qassam, *al-Mashhad al-Isra’ili* 264 (July 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. al-Maktab al-I’lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili* 265 (July 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili* 273 (September 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili* 277 (October 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-Kata'ib al-Qassam, *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili* 278 (October 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. See Chapter 7 for further discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. “Tanasut Hamas fi al-Qita'?” *al-'arabiya*, August 4, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. See Chapter 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Mas'ab Hassan Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas* (Ben Shemen: Modan, 2010) 168. For more on Hamas’s covert operations in various fields, see Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. “Skirah benose ḥamas – hitaẓmut ubinyan koaḥ,” Shin Bet, December 16, 2008, <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/study/gaza-hamas-terror-report.aspx>; *Tahalikh hahitaẓmut haẓvait shel ḥamas bereẓuat azah - tmunat maẓav nekhonah lemers 2008* (Ramat Hasharon: The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, April 2008), 26–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. According to Col. Muli Moran, an officer in the IDF’s Computer and IT Directorate, in an interview with Or Heller, “Ḥeyl hatikshuv – hasiyua hashaket leloḥamim bisdeh hakrav,” *Channel 10*, February 15, 2009. <https://13news.co.il/10news/news/9064> [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Author’s interview with A., an Israeli security operative who works with counterintelligence against Hizballah and Hamas, held in Tel Aviv, August 13, 2019; Winter, “Bapada'm ḥosfim,” 10–11. Interview by Ehud Hamo with Suhaib Yusuf, “Habekhir lesheavar sheḥosef et sodot ḥamas,” *N12* website, July 3, 2019. For more on Hamas’ exploitation of the Turkish arena, see: “Kakh niẓel ḥamas et hasiyua haturki leẓrakhim ẓvaiim,” Shin Bet, March 21, 2017; “Kakh poelet ḥamas al admat turkiyah,” Shin Bet, February 14, 2018. Hamas activity in cyberspace, including by way of Turkey, will be discussed further below. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. For more on Hamas’s awareness of and confrontation with Israel’s GEOINT collection, see Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. al-Muqawamah Ikhtaraqat Ta'irat al-Iḥtilal 'Adad min al-Sanawat, *al-Majd al-Amni* (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Interviews with Samir Mashrawi cited by Ilana Dayan, “Uvdah ḥosefet: Matarat hamilḥama – kibush yishuvim,” Channel 2, November 10, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Dayan, “Uvdah ḥosefet”; Avi Issacharoff, “Ḥasifa: Hareshut hiẓliḥa leyaret tishdorot mazla'tim shel ẓahal,” *Walla*, November 9, 2014. <https://news.walla.co.il/item/2800044> [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Basil Salahiyyah, “al-Fidiu al-Asli, Anfaq Isra'iliyyah bi-Itijat Ghaza, Basil Salahiyyah al-Fidiu al-Kamil,” *YouTube*, January 7, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-SUrBBK8II> [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. “Kakh ḥasaf ẓahal nisayon ḥamas lehistalet al telefonim shel ḥayyalim,” IDF, undated; according to information from the IDF, published by Yoav Zeitun, “Niḥsefah matkefet rigul neged ḥayyalim: Haprofilim hamefatim shel ḥamas,” *Ynet*, January 11, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Zeitun, “Niḥsefah matkefet rigul”; Noam Amir and Yossi Melman, “Tiud: Peilei ḥamas hitḥazu leẓeirot vehistaltu al telefonim nayyadim shel ḥayyalim,” *Maariv* *Online*, January 11, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. “Kakh ḥasaf ẓahal,” IDF. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. These screenshots of the correspondence were published by the IDF in the context of reports about Hamas attacks. Note that parts of the conversation have been redacted by the military censor. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. IDF website. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Salahiyyah, “al-Fidiu al-Asli.” [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Salahiyyah presents this testimony in his statements. An examination of the two correspondents in the chat shows that the Israeli involved did indeed serve in the IDF and that his interlocutor is indeed one of his Facebook friends. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Salahiyyah, “al-Fidiu al-Asli." [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Salahiyyah, “al-Fidiu al-Asli.” [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Zeitun, “Espionage attack exposed”; Statement by Col. A., Head of Counterintelligence and Monitoring Investigations in the cybersecurity department of the IDF, cited by Shabtai Bendet, “Hamas’s femmes fatale: Another 15 fake profiles discovered," *Walla*, January 13, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Naomi Summer, “Kakh sukal shuv nisayon ḥamas lehishtalet al hatelefon shelakhem,” IDF, July 3, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Naomi Summer, “Nisayon harigul heḥadash shel ḥamas,” IDF, July 3, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Botnet: a software or internet entity that exploits online resources to carry out actions on behalf of whomever controls it. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. According to ClearSky, an information security company, as published in several media outlets, including: Amitai Ziv, “Zehirut: heḥamas mefiẓ aplikaẓiyat ẓeva adom mitḥazeh,” *TheMarker*, August 9, 2018, https://www.themarker.com/technation/1.6364227; Sagi Cohen, “Ḥamas mefiẓ tokhnat rigul hamitḥazeh leẓeva adom,” *Ynet*, August 9, 2018. https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5326040,00.html [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Cohen, “Ḥamas mefiẓ tokhnat rigul.” [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Cellcom is a popular Israeli communications company that operates a cellular network, as well as streaming and television services. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Cited by Mikey Levy, “Hamas’s cyberwar: Distribution of fake RedAlert app," *Walla*, August 10, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Based on Rousso’s own testimony at the *Shabatarbut* event in Holon in March 2019. Cited by Yossi Hatoni, “Heḥamas hekim letal ruso amud faisbuk mezuyaf,” *PC*, March 29, 2019. https://www.pc.co.il/news/287482/ [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Phishing: a method whereby the hacker impersonates someone else in order to persuade their victim to carry out actions that will cause them to fall into the hacker’s “phishing net.” [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. “Sukal shuv nisayon ḥamas lehishtalet al hatelefon shelakhem. Kol hapratim, hadmuyot vehahanḥayot,” IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, February 16, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. “Sukal shuv nisayon ḥamas,” IDF Spokesperson’s Unit. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. “Sukal shuv nisayon ḥamas,” IDF Spokesperson’s Unit. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. The testimonies are cited by Nina Fox, “Soḥeḥu im mitḥazei ḥamas: Lo ḥashavti sheapol bapaḥ,” *Ynet*, January 16, 2020. https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5678795,00.html [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. “Another Hamas attempt thwarted,” IDF Spokesperson’s Unit. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. “Operation Bearded Barbie: APT-C-23 Campaign Targeting Israeli Officials,” *Cybereason,* April 6, 2022. <https://www.cybereason.com/blog/operation-bearded-barbie-apt-c-23-campaign-targeting-israeli-officials> [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. According to the testimony of Lt. Col. A, a high-ranking officer in IDF’s data security department who led the exposure of the Hamas infrastructure. Cited by Nir Devori, “Habanot, aplikaẓiat hamisḥakim – vehahishtaltut al hasmartfon shel haloḥamim,” *N12*¸July 3, 2022. <https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2022_q3/Article-bf45bb343d2c181026.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Interview by Yoav Limor with Gen. Noam Sha'ar, the head of the IDF’s Cyber Defense Brigade, *Israel Hayom-Shishabat*, February 8, 2019, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Ran Bar-Zik, “Lamah ẓahal himliẓ leyishuvim beotef aza lenatek maẓlemot, umah efshar lilmod mizeh,” *Haaretz*, May 16, 2021. <https://www.haaretz.co.il/captain/tutorial/2021-05-16/ty-article/.premium/0000017f-dee8-d3a5-af7f-feeebb5e0000> [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Additional information security firms also attributed this infrastructure to Hamas. See, for example, “Operation Bearded Barbie,” the report by Cybereason referenced above. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. “Operation DustySky,” January 2016, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. “Operation DustySky,” January 2016, 4–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. “Operation DustySky,” January 2016, 5–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. “Operation DustySky,” January 2016, 9–11, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. “Operation DustySky – Part 2,” ClearSky, June 2016, 10–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. “Operation DustySky – Part 2,” June 2016, 21–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. For more, see the full report: “Molerats in the cloud,” *Cybereason Nocturnus Team*, December 9, 2020. <https://www.cybereason.com/hubfs/dam/collateral/reports/Molerats-in-the-Cloud-New-Malware-Arsenal-Abuses-Cloud-Platforms-in-Middle-East-Espionage-Campaign.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. For more on Israel’s strategy vis-à-vis Hamas and the offsetting of its capabilities, see: Netanel Flamer, “Offsetting the offset: Israel’s strategy vis-à-vis Hamas during the 2021 Gaza War,” *Israel Affairs* 28, no. 3 (2022), 373–393. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. According to the Director of the IDF’s Cyberspace Defense Brigade, Brig. Gen. D, and IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Ronen Manlis, cited by Yoav Zeitun, “Ẓahal: sikalnu tashtit ḥamas shenistah lifgoa bayekholot ezraḥiot baemẓaut hasyber,” *Ynet*, May 5, 2019. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5504496,00.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Einav Greenberg Cohen, “Shomrei haḥomot hakibernetiot: shanim avdu bayeḥidot hasyber al hatekifot haḥashayot haeleh. Hashavua zeh karah,” IDF, May 20, 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/2b8zasm8>; IDF Spokesperson’s overview as cited by Tal Shahaf, “Kakh hushmad maarakh hasyber shel ḥamas,” *Ynet*, May 21, 2021. https://www.ynet.co.il/digital/technews/article/HkIluANKd [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. From a speech at the Cyberspace Week Conference at Tel Aviv University, cited in several media, e.g., “Ḥizballah veḥamas maẓliḥim bakelim pshutim lehatrid otanu,” *Ynet*, June 26, 2017. <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4981131,00.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Excerpts of Yaalon’s speech at the Cyberspace Week Conference at Tel Aviv University are cited by Orr Heller, “Hatḥum hasyberneti hu merḥav leḥimah bifnei aẓmo sheyesh bo isuf modiin, hatkafah vehaganah,” *Israel Defense*, June 24, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Blake W. Mobley, *Terrorism and Counterintelligence: How Terrorist Groups Elude Detection* (New York:

     Columbia University Press, 2012), 1–2. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. For clarification of this distinction, see Hank Prunckun*, Counterintelligence – Theory and Practice* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Isalmiyyah, *Mithak Hamas,* 1988 (print edition, 2004), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Channel 10, April 19, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 82–83. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. HCJ 658/89, *Sinwar v. IDF Commander in the Gaza Strip* (published in *Nevo*, August 16, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 82–83. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. HCJ, *Sinwar v. IDF Commander*. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. A dead drop involves an agreed-upon place where one person leaves secret or illegal materials (e.g., intelligence or weapons) for another to pick up. This allows the two to avoid meeting one another, which might expose them or their activity. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. HCJ, *Sinwar v. IDF Commander*; Yaakov Habakuk and Shakhib Sallah, *Teror beshem islam: Profil shel tnuat ḥamas* (Jerusalem: Defense Ministry, 1999), 53–54; Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 81. Khaled al-Hindi appears in Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 141, as someone who “coordinated the gathering of information on collaborators and moral offenders at the start of the intifada.” [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Aviad, *Leksikon* *ḥamas*, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. “al-Shahid al-Qassami Muhammad Jibril al-Shimali,” *Al-Qassam.net*, n.d., <https://www.alqassam.net/arabic/martyrs/details/1140>. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. “al-Shahid al-Qassami al-qa'id / Abd al-Nasser abu Shauqah (Abu Muhammad),” *Al-Qassam.net*, n.d., <https://www.alqassam.net/arabic/martyrs/details/231>; Aviad, *Leksikon* *ḥamas*, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 81–82. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 135; Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 118–119; Habakuk and Sallah, *Teror beshem islam*, 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 121–122. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 152, 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 157 [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 112–113. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Cited by Naomi Levitzky, “Hashabak bamilḥamah,” *Yedioth Ahronoth – Shabbat*, January 8, 1993, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. “Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: Human Rights Abuses and Violations,” *B’Tselem,* January 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Criminal Case 26621/14, *State of Israel v. John Doe*, 2 (published in *Pador*, November 26, 2014). The name was not published because the individual continued to be hounded by various Palestinian entities as a suspected collaborator. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Aviad, *Leksikon* *ḥamas*, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 29–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 26–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Sabag, *Zikhronot abu yusuf*, 118–119. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. According to the details of the interrogation of the former collaborator, cited by Haim Braude, “Meshatef peulah sheraẓah lehitkabel leḥamas raẓaḥ et hayisraeli ben ha-23,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 18, 1994, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Roni Shaked and David Regev, “Ḥamas: Lo nirtzaḥ meshatfei peulah,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, May 30, 1994, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. See Gaza Strip Region 52/00, *Military Prosecution v. Yusuf Muhammad Juma Kenen*, 1–4 (published in *Pador*, January 14, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas*, 109–111, 126–127, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. See *Sallah Ahmad Sallah Shaikh v. Military Prosecution*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. *John Doe v. Military Commander of the West Bank*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. According to the testimony of Hassan al-Gamasi, director of the prison, and documentation collected there, cited by Shlomi Eldar, “Ḥadashot 10,” Channel 10, July 3, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Interview with al-'Arabiya network, April 21, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. "al-Munawarah al-'askariyyah – Katibat al-Burij," *Al-Qassam.net*, October 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. al-Aqsa Channel, February 23, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. al-'Arabiya Channel, April 20, 2009. For the full report by Human Rights Watch, which led the accusations against Hamas, see “Under Cover of War: Hamas Political Violence in Gaza,” Human Rights Watch, April 20, 2009. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/04/20/under-cover-war/hamas-political-violence-gaza>. The report lists incidents in which harm was caused to suspected collaborators. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. al-Aqsa Channel, September 23, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. “Tafasil 'an qiadi Hamas al-mauquf wa-al-ma'alumat alati sharabaha li-isra'il,” al-'Arabiya Channel, July 13, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. al-Aqsa Channel, May 4, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Wizarat al-dakhiliyyah wa-al-amn al-watani, "film al-wahal," September 13, 2012 (originally screened on the al-Aqsa channel), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fETkoilL20> [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Serious Criminal Case 316/10, *State of Israel v. Nur al-Din Hamadan*, 1 (published in *Pador*, September 21, 2012); Serious Criminal Case 321/10, *State of Israel v. Hussain Abu Tir*, 1 (published in *Pador*, November 9, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Habakuk and Sallah, *Teror beshem islam*, 101–102. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Habakuk and Sallah, *Teror beshem islam*, 79–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 118, 135, 151, 161; al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Hakham, *Azah begovah haenayim*, 202, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Interview with MI Director Uri Sagi, conducted by Ron Ben-Yishai, “The atmosphere in the country gives succor to terrorist organizations," *Yedioth Ahronoth – Pesach*, April 5, 1993, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. The details of the incident as reported by the Shin Bet are cited by Alex Fishman, “NIS 40,000 are enough to detonate a neighborhood in Tel Aviv,” *Yedioth Ahronoth – Shabbat*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Yusuf, *Ben hahamas*, 217–218. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Arman, *Muhandisu al-maut,* 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. According to the confessions of the members of the fireteam in their interrogations, cited by Michal Goldberg and Edna Adato, *Yedioth Ahronoth (Sha’ot)*, June 1999, 10. Abasi was caught first; following his interrogation, the three other fireteam members were caught about a month later. This would seem to indicate that leaving the documents intact might have enabled Abasi's colleagues to carry out the attack in his absence, but Abasi preferred secrecy over operational ability. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib fi kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, “Amn al-watha'ik,” *Zad al-mujahidin*, 8, June 2008, 7–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Translation based on the standard classification levels for government documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib, ”Amn al-watha'ik,” 8–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib, *Sillah al-Qans*, back cover; Da'irat al-I'dad wa-l-tadrib fi kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, *Silah zad al-duru'* (Gaza: Harakat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah, 2013), back cover. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. *Al-mujahid amam al-tahqiq wa-l-ta'zib* [Limassol: Harakat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah, 1988]. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. See Chapter 3 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 174–178. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. *United States of America v. Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzuk, Muhammad Hamid Khalil Salah and Abdelhaleem Hasan Abdelraziq Ashqar* – second superseding indictment, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, August 2003, 26–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Da'irat al-I'dad wa-l-tadrib fi kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, “Al-Amn al-'askari,” *Zad al-mujahidin*, 5 March 2008, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Appeal 1051/11, *Hitham Mustafa Hassan Quran v. Military Prosecution*, 2 (published in *Pador*, January 6, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Criminal Case 5171/17, *State of Israel v. Fadi Dahar*, 2, 4 (published in *Pador*, July 16, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Appeal 2236/07, *Fuaz Mahmud Ali Nasser v. Military Prosecution*, 2 (published in *Pador*, October 8, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. West Bank 4935/14, *Military Prosecution v. Azz a-Din al-Qassam Zi'ad Hassan Awad*, 2 (published in *Nevo*, July 2, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Cited by Tova Tsimuki, “Security sources: We can handle suicide bombers,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 23, 1995, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. “When they took Gilad: The full reconstruction,” Channel 10, May 17, 2011. For more on the intelligence and counterintelligence aspects of the operation to abduct Gilad Shalit, see Chapter 6 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Appeal (Gaza Sector) 35/02, *Military Prosecution v. Mazin Muhammad Aziz 'Alian*, 1 (published in *Pador*, November 13, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Appeal (Gaza Sector) 35/00, *Nishat Khalil Kedura 'Aiyyash v. Military Prosecution*, 1–22 (published in *Nevo*, July 26, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas*, 171–172. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Appeal (West Bank) 112/01, *Zi'ad Musa 'Abed al-Majid Hamad v. Military Prosecution*, 1 (published in *Pador*, November 19, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Appeal (West Bank) 38/01, *Military Prosecution v. Ibrahim Muhamad Yusuf Zaharan*, 3 (published in *Pador*, March 12, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Administrative Appeal (West Bank) 2173/04, *Maher Husseini Ali Shafi v. Military Prosecution*, 1 (published in *Pador*, November 9, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Criminal Case 1187/08, *State of Israel v. Mahmud Nagar*, 2 (published in *Pador*, February 20, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Administrative Appeal 2186/12, *Musa Abed al-Karim Isa Dar Sarur v. Military Prosecution*, 1–3 (published in *Pador*, August 2, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Administrative Appeal 2113/11, *Military Prosecution v. Bushra Tawil*, 2 (published in *Pador*, August 4, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. *United States of America v. Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzuk*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. West Bank 1173/10, *Military Prosecution v. Ali Said Ahmad Said*, 9, 10, 11 (published in *Pador*, August 25, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Serious Criminal Case 1094/08, *State of Israel v. Tala't Maruf*, 11 (published in *Pador*, April 26, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. “Ramadan fi ayounhom,” *al-Quds*, September 12, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Katibat al-shahid Nadal Nassir, “al-Maudu': Lum'i,” [2014]. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. West Bank 3219/15, *Military Prosecution v. Yahiya Muhammad Naif Abdullah Haj Hamed*, 4 (published in *Pador*, June 22, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas*, 179, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. *State of Israel v. Nazmi Ibn Azz al-Adin Hussein*. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Appeal (West Bank) 112/01, *Zi'ad Mousa Abed al-Majid Hamad v. Military Prosecution*, 2 (published in *Pador*, November 19, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Criminal Appeal 1776/06, *Abas al-Sid v. State of Israel*, 3 (published in *Pador*, September 5, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Serious Criminal Case 4986/11, *State of Israel v. Durar Abu Sisi*, 7 (published in *Pador*, July 15, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Serious Criminal Case 312/10, *State of Israel v. Murad Kamal*, 3 (published in *Pador*, January 31, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Serious Criminal Case 27112/10, *State of Israel v. Islam Mar'i*, 3 (published in *Pador*, May 19, 2011). See Chapter 2 for discussion of Mar'i's 2010 recruitment. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Serious Criminal Case 32418/11, *State of Israel v. Jihad Atoun*, 3 (published in *Nevo*, May 24, 2012); Criminal Appeal 4647/12, *Jihad Atoun v. State of Israel*, 3 (published in *Pador*, July 30, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Appeal against Military Court Verdict 3080/14, *Salam Mahmud Ibrahim Shurkas v. Military Prosecution*, 2 (published in *Pador*, February 10, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Jawwal is the most popular and ubiquitous telecommunications service provider among the Palestinian population. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Criminal Case 27227/15, *State of Israel v. Ahmad Saidi*, 4 (published in *Pador*, February 1, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas*, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Serious Criminal Case 32418-03-11, *State of Israel v. Jihad Atoun*, 2 (published in *Pador*, June 12, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Miscellaneous Criminal Motions 6719/17, *F. F. v. State of Israel*, 3 (published in *Pador*, September 28, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Non-content intelligence: intelligence consisting of the technical parameters of a conversation, such as the location of the devices, the duration of the call, or the phones’ contact details, rather than what was said in the conversation. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-kata'ib al-Qassam, “Ma'lumat amniyyah haula istikhdam al-Jawal,” *Hamat al-Thughur*, 3, November 13, 2005, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. al-Maktab al-I'lami li-kata'ib al-Qassam, “Ma'lumat amniyyah haula istikhdam al-Jawal.” [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Wahidat al-rasd al-fada'ii fi al-maktab al-i'lami li-kata'ib al-Qassam, “al-Tajasus 'ala al-itisal,” *al-Rasd,* 24, October 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Miscellaneous Criminal Motions 4220/09, *State of Israel v. Haytham Hiles*, 2 (published in *Pador*, May 21, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, “al-Ta'irah al-istakhbariyyah Skai Lait,” *Salsalat A'rif 'Aduka,* July 2007, 4–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, “al-Ta'irah al-istakhbariyyah Skai Lait,” 15–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, “Anzimat al-kashf wa-l-muraqibah 'abr al-kamirat al-Kharaiyyah,” *Salsalat A'rif 'Aduka,* August 2008, 1–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-qassam, “Anzimat al-kashf wa-l-muraqibah 'abr al-kamirat al-Kharaiyyah,”, 6–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. “al-Munawara al-'askariyyah,” *Al-Qassam.net*. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. al-Aqsa Channel, December 23, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. al-Aqsa Channel, December 4, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Fox News, December 6, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib, *Silah al-Qans,* 72, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. *Hahitmodedut im iyum haminharot*, State Comptroller’s Report, February 28, 2017, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. 'Iad al-Daud, “Fi diafat al-Bunduqiyyah,” *al-Jazeera* Channel, July 3, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. al-Maktab al-i'lami, “Anfaq al-jahim.” Disseminated on the internet in various forums and later uploaded to the Hamas website in two parts: Da'irat al-i'lam al-'askari, “Anfaq al-jahim (al-Juzi al-awal),” *AlQassam.net*, May 24, 2008, <https://www.alqassam.net/arabic/videos/index/5>; : Da'irat al-i'lam al-'askari, “Anfaq al-jahim (al-Juzi al-thani),” *AlQassam.net*, May 24, 2008, <https://www.alqassam.net/arabic/videos/index/5>. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. “Hashimush sheoseh ḥamas betvakh hatat-karkai bereẓuah,” Shin Bet, n.d. <https://shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/%D7%A1%D7%A7%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA%20%D7%95%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%A1%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9D/tunnels-review.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. For an eyewitness description of these attempted attacks preceding the explosion of the tunnel, see Eli Bohadana, “Laila bamuẓav tarmit,” *NRG*, July 25, 2001. <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/nrg/online/archive/ART/169/045.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. “Anfaq al-jahim,” March 2005; “Suklu raid atar vemuḥamad abu smallah, mebekhirei hazroa haẓvait shel ḥamas,” Shin Bet, August 20, 2014. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/NewItem210814.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. “Anfaq al-jahim,” March 2005; Amos Harel, “Ḥamas nisa lefoẓeẓ muẓav ẓahal leyad rafiaḥ,” *Haaretz*, December 17, 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. “Anfaq al-jahim,” March 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Serious Criminal Case 1003/08, *State of Israel v. Atwa Amour*, 2 (published in *Pador*, April 17, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. *Hahitmodedut im iyum haminharot*, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. al-Daud, “Fi diafat al-Bunduqiyyah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Serious Criminal Case 1094/08, *State of Israel v. Tala't Maruf*, April 26, 2008, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. *Hahitmodedut im iyum haminharot*, 5–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. “Kamira al-Jazira,” *al-Jazeera*, August 7, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. “A glimpse at Hamas’s ‘metro’ project,” IDF website, May 20, 2021. <https://www.idf.il/%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%9E%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D/2021/%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%98-%D7%9E%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%95-%D7%AA%D7%A7%D7%A6%D7%99%D7%91-%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%A1-%D7%9E%D7%A0%D7%94%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A8-%D7%A2%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%9E%D7%97%D7%99%D7%A8-%D7%A2%D7%96%D7%94/> [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. *Hahitmodedut im iyum haminharot*, p. 44. For more on Israel’s attempts to combat the tunnels since their scope was discovered during Operation Protective Edge, see Raphael D. Marcus, “Learning ‘Under Fire’: Israel’s Improvised Military Adaptation to Hamas Tunnel Warfare,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 42, no. 3–4 (2019), pp. 344–370. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. *Ynet*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4816481,00.html>; *The Marker*, August 20, 2017, <https://www.themarker.com/allnews/1.4365499>. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. See testimonials by engineers and laborers, “Solel boneh maẓigah – hamikhshol hatat karkai bigvul reẓuat azah,” *YouTube*, December 30, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iC-FNZFKJ9k> [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Announcement by the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit, May 21, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Based on data supplied by the IDF and cited by Nir Devori, “Sikum shomer haḥomot: ẓahal hishmid meal 100 k”m shel minharot tat-karkaiot,” *Mako*, May 21, 2021. <https://www.mako.co.il/news-israel/2021_q2/Article-71fa086b30d8971026.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qasamiyyah,* 102–105. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qasamiyyah*, 11, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Kata'ib al-qassam- da'irat al-i'dada wa-l-tadrib, “al-Amn al-'askari,” March 2008, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. al-Mish'al, “Ma hafi a'zam." [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. al-Daoud, "Fi diafat al-bunduqiyyah.” [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. “Sinwar Met with Several University Lecturers in the Strip,” remarks by Yahiya Sinwar, *Donia al-Watan*, June 6, 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=538115407212291&ref=search> [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. “Risalah li-l-nushata' wa-l-sahafiin,” May 17, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. For more on Shalit’s abduction, see Chapter 6 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. A breakdown of Hamas’s use of offensive counterintelligence may be found above in Chapter 2 (doubling agents) and below in Chapter 6 (the abduction of the late soldier Naḥshon Waxman). [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Examples may be found in Chapter 7 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 38–39. Interestingly, the operation was exposed even before the car arrived at the site. Jabarin admits that the execution of the operation was flawed: The colors of the attackers’ shirts and trousers were wrong, the operatives wore civilian shoes of a type uncommon outside the West Bank, and so on. See Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 40–41. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Shaked and Shabi, *Ḥamas*, 15–16. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 56–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Jabarin, *Hikaiat al-dam*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. Shabi and Shaked, *Ḥamas*, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. *United States of America v. Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzuk*, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qassamiyyah*, 38, 46–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qassamiyyah*, 37, 44–45, 48–49. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qassamiyyah*, 45–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qassamiyyah*, 57–58, 62–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Zikra al(16)… al-qissah al-kamilah li-asr faqsman al-halqah al-ulah,” *AlQassam.net*, October 11, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Zikra al(16).” [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Halqah al(2)...al-mujahidin ya'sarun faqsman wa-yakhafunahu bi-makhba muhasan,” *Al-Qassam.net*, October 19, 2010; Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “(al-Halqah 3)...al-qa'id Daif yu'linu 'an asr faqsman wa-yudalilu al-'adu,” *Al-Qassam.net*, October 19, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Carmi Gillon, *Shabak bein hakraim* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2000), 217–220; Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Halqah(3)”; Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Halqah(4)..al-takhabut yasudu al-kian wa-l-shaikh Yassin yukhatibu al-asrin,” *Al-Qassam.net*, October 21, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Halqah(4)”; Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Halqah(5)..al-'adu yu'azibu al-mujahid Yaghmur we-intazi'u minhu makan faqsman,” *Al-Qassam.net*, October 24, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Serious Criminal Case 4058/01, *State of Israel v. Natsheh Iyad*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, March 2, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. 'Arman, *Muhandisu al-mawt*, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. Appeal 1627/07, *Mari Subahi Abu Sa'eeda v. Military Prosecution* (published in *Nevo*, May 13, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. Appeal 1755/07, *Military Prosecution v. Muhammad Omar Abdullah Za'eed* (published in *Nevo*, November 24, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. Serious Criminal Case 775/04, *State of Israel v. Amro Abed al-Aziz*, 1 (published in *Pador*, December 29, 2005); Serious Criminal Case 776/04, *State of Israel v. Ahmad Bin Muhammad Abed*, 1–2 (published in *Pador*, March 17, 2005); Criminal Appeal 2005/06, *Abdul Aziz Amaro v. State of Israel*, 1 (published in *Pador*, May 25, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. Appeal 1/11, *Muhammad Saker Muhahhad Hassan v. Chief Military Prosecutor*, 3 (published in *Pador*, January 12, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. “al-Waim al-mutabadad… usturat al-daqa'ik al-thamaniyyah,” *Al-Risalah,* June 25, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. Alex Fishman, “Einayyim aẓumot lirvaḥa,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, June 24, 2006, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. “al-Waim al-mutabadad.” [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 59–60; “Kshelakḥu et gilad – hashiḥzur hamale,” Channel 10, May 17, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znYpvU4IHbs>. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 44, 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. “al-Waim al-mutabadad.” [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. “Kshelakḥu et gilad.” [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. “Kshelakḥu et gilad.” [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. al-Shafa'i', *Hashavui*. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. Serious Criminal Case 1003/08, *State of Israel v. 'Atwa 'Amur*, 203 (published in *Pador*, April 17, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Serious Criminal Case 1094/08, *State of Israel v. Tala't Maruf*, p. 14 (published in *Pador*, April 26, 2008). For additional instances of preoperational intel gathering through forward observation over the last decade, see Chapter 2 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. al-Maktab al-I'lami fi Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, “Rasd Mawqi' al-'Amaliat Sharq al-Shaja'iyah Qabla Tanfidhiha bi-Aiyam,” July 31, 2014, <https://alqassam.net/arabic/videos/index/675>; Kata'ib al-Shahid 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, “Bi-l-fidiu.. al-Tariq ila <<NahAl 'oz>> wa-l-Lahzat al-Hasima,” *Al-Qassam.net*, July 28, 2019. <https://alqassam.net/arabic/news/details/15251> [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. Criminal Case (Jerusalem) 1496/11, *State of Israel, represented by Atty. Rivka Alkobi v. Baim al-Omri (indictment)*, 4 (published in *Nevo*, January 6, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Criminal Case (Jerusalem) 1496/11, *State of Israel, represented by Atty. Rivka Alkobi v. Baim al-Omri (indictment)*, 7; Shin Bet, “Niḥsefah hitargenut shel ḥamas mimizraḥ yerushalaim,” Shin Bet, November 1, 2011. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/shotef020111.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. Appeal (West Bank) 3334/14, *Amon Mahmud Sabbah v. Military Prosecution* (published in *Nevo*, April 2, 2015); Shin Bet, “Neeẓrah ḥuliyah shetikhnenah levaẓea pigua neged shayyeret sar haḥuẓ avigdor liberman,” Shin Bet, November 19, 2014. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/NewItem201114.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. Shin Bet, “Niḥsefah huliyah ẓvait shel ḥamas shetikhnenah levaẓea pigua yeri leever koḥot ẓava beabu dis bemahalakh purim,” Shin Bet, April 13, 2015. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/NewItem140415.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Shin Bet, “Niḥsefah tashtit teror shel toshavim yisraelim mimizraḥ yerushalaim bahem peilei ḥamas,” Shin Bet, December 13, 2016. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/NewItem091216.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. Shin Bet, “Beshavuot haaḥronim niḥsefu mispar hitargenuyot ḥamas beyosh,” Shin Bet, March 13, 2017. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/13.3.2017.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Shin Bet, “Sheirut habitaḥon haklali sikel pigua ḥatifah shetukhnan leḥag haḥanukah,” Shin Bet, December 13, 2017. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/chanucah.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. Shin Bet, “Shabak sikel pigua beetẓtadion tedi birushalayim – neeẓru 3 ḥevrei ḥuliyat ḥamas,” Shin Bet, April 22, 2020. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/%D7%A9%D7%91%D7%9B-%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%9C-%D7%A4%D7%99%D7%92%D7%95%D7%A2-%D7%91%D7%90%D7%99%D7%A6%D7%98%D7%93%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%98%D7%93%D7%99-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D-%E2%80%93-%D7%A0%D7%A2%D7%A6%D7%A8%D7%95-3-%D7%97%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99-%D7%97%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%90%D7%A1.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. Shin Bet, “Sikul pigua tofet bisamukh leyom habeḥirot,” Shin Bet, April 28, 2019. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/%D7%A1%D7%99%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%9C-%D7%A4%D7%99%D7%92%D7%95%D7%A2-%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%A4%D7%AA-%D7%91%D7%A1%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%9A-%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9D-%D7%94%D7%91%D7%97%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. “Shabak ḥosef giyus ktinim al yadei ḥamas bireẓuat azah lebiẓua piguei teror beyosh,” Shin Bet, November 9, 2020. <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/new.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Details of the document, which was leaked online before its removal a few hours later, are cited in Roni Shaked, “Devarim sheroim misham,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 15, 2012, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. As kibbutzim have shifted away from agriculture and turned to high-tech and other industries to generate income, many have sold off land to private investors to build houses. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Shaked, “Devarim sheroim misham.” [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. Wadi, *Butulat al-Qassamiyyah*, 11–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. Yusuf, *Ben haḥamas*, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Kata'ib al-shahid 'izz al-din al-Qassam, “al-Ta'irah al-Istakhbartiyyah,” 2–3. For a detailed discussion of two issues of the publication, on forward observation of UAVs and Israel’s ruse capabilities, see Chapter 5 above in the context of Hamas efforts to combat Israel’s GEOINT. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. Serious Criminal Case 4986/11, *State of Israel v. Dirar Abu Sisi*, 6–7 (published in *Pador*, July 15, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. al-Maktab al-i'lami wa-liwa' ghaza al-janubi, *al-Jaish al-sahaiyoni – al-manatiq al-'askari* [2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. al-Maktab al-i'lami wa-liwa' ghaza al-janubi, *al-Jaish al-sahaiyoni – al-manatiq al-'askari*. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Wahidat al-rasd fi liwa' al-wasta – al-istakhbarat al-'askari, “A'rif Aduka,” [2013?]. See below for photographs of both sides of the poster. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib, *Silah zad al-Duru',* 31–113. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib, *Silah zad al-Duru'*, 114–133. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. Da'irat al-i'dad wa-l-tadrib, *Silah zad al-Duru'*, 114–117, 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. “Rosh aman haba: Shigarnu bamivẓa 5 tilim yakarim – vehisatnu leyam im kabalat meda ḥadash,” *Ynet*, June 6, 2021. <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/Hk00JDqqd> [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. “Hashimush sheoseh haḥamas baezraḥim kemagen enoshi,” *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, January 2009, 2–4. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. Testimony of Col. (res.) Yonatan Baransky, “Magenim enoshiim,” 30–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Testimony of team commander Cpt. (res.) Ravid Alfasi, “Magenim enoshiim,” 24–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. See the many examples in “Hashimush sheoseh hahamas baezrahim,” above; “Bamivẓa ẓuk eitan shav veasah ḥamas shimush baezraḥim kemagen enoshi leshem meniat tekifat beit peil teror a”y heyl heavir hayisraeli,” *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, July 10, 2014; “Shimushim bebatei sefer leẓorkhim ẓvaiim a”y ḥamas veirgunei teror aḥerim bereẓuah: hastarat roketot bebeit sefer shel unra bemahalakh mivẓa ẓuk eitan,” *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, July 20, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. “Unra divḥa al ḥasifat minharah haoveret mitaḥat leshnei batei sefer shehi mefilah bareẓuah,” *The Meir Amit* *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center*, June 15, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. “Sada al-shari',” al-Aqsa Channel, March 25, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. al-Aqsa Channel, May 13, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. al-Aqsa Channel, September 15, 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. Fox News, December 6, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. Testimony of Col. (res.) Yonatan Baransky, “Magenim enoshiim,” 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. For more about the background of the operation and the moves made on the first day, see: “Mivẓa oferet yeẓukah – idkun mis’ 1,” *The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center*, December 28, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. Shlomi Eldar, *Lehakir et haḥamas* (Keter: Jerusalem, 2012), 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. Eldar, *Lehakir et haḥamas*, 290, 295. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
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462. Yoram Cohen and Jeffrey White, “Hamas in Combat: The Military Performance of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Focus* 97 (October 2009): 5–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
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