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'Hamas no longer has cyber capabilities after our strike'

In addition to fighting digital threat, Israeli Air Force also bombs headquarters of terror group's technology division in Gaza

The Israeli military said its soldiers thwarted a cyber attack by the Hamas terror group over the weekend, without elaborating on the nature or target of the offensive.

The Israel Defense Forces said once the digital threat was neutralized, fighter jets destroyed the building housing the headquarters of the terror group's cyber unit.

“ Hamas no longer has cyber capabilities after our strike,” IDF spokesperson Ronen Manelis told reporters.

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The attack came amid a weekend of intense fighting between the IDF and terror groups in the Gaza Strip. Since Saturday, Palestinian terrorists launched upwards of 600 rockets and mortar shells at Israel, killing two people, and fired an anti-tank guided missile at a car north of the Gaza Strip, killing the driver.

In response, the IDF conducted hundreds of airstrikes on targets linked to terror groups throughout the Gaza Strip, killing at least 14 Palestinians, nearly all of them members of rocket-launching cells.

The commander of the IDF's Cyber Division, who can only be identified by his rank and first Hebrew letter of his name, Brig. Gen. “ Dalet,” would only say that the cyber attack occurred Saturday and was aimed at “ harming the quality of life of Israeli citizens.”

The military said much of the information about the attempted attack cannot be published as it might reveal to Hamas details about Israel's cyber capabilities.

According to the officer, the attempt by Hamas was not a particularly advanced one. “We were a step ahead of them the whole time,” he said.

The IDF said the cyber operation was a collaborative effort between the elite Unit 8200 of Military Intelligence, the IDF’s Teleprocessing Directorate and the Shin Bet security service.

“Israel’s ability to defend itself and thwart cyber attacks means the Hamas terror group’s efforts to carry out attacks in the cyber realm fail time and time again,” a Shin Bet official said.

According to Dalet, this was one of the first incidents in which Israeli soldiers had to fend off a cyber attack while also fighting a physical battle.

“What’s special here is that we thwarted this threat under fire,” Dalet told reporters.

The general said Hamas likely knows by now that its effort failed.

“I believe that they know they didn’t succeed in doing what they intended to do,” Dalet said.

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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Siren to blare around country at 8 p.m., marking somber Memorial Day events, amid tensions in Gaza and controversy over a ceremony dedicated to both Israelis and Palestinians

Israelis will pay tribute to the country's fallen soldiers and terror victims starting at 8 p.m. Tuesday, bowing their heads for a minute of silence as sirens will sound around the country, kicking off Memorial Day.

In all, 95 new names were added over the past year to the roster of 23,741 soldiers who died defending the country. They include 40 disabled veterans who passed away due to complications from injuries sustained during their service.

Sixteen names were also added to the list of terror victims who perished in attacks, bringing the total to 3,150. Four of them were killed on Sunday by projectiles fired by Palestinian terror groups during a [two-day round of intense fighting](#) in and around the Gaza Strip.

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The annual commemoration comes this year in the wake of heightened tensions following the flare-up, which saw hundreds of rockets launched at Israeli communities and retaliatory airstrikes on jihadist targets in Gaza. With the Eurovision Song Contest set to take place next week in Tel Aviv, security officials in Israel have warned that violence could return within days, with terror groups threatening to disrupt the international event.



Israeli soldiers carry the coffin of Zachary Baumel at the Mount Herzl Military cemetery in Jerusalem on April 4, 2019. (Hadas Parush/Flash90)

The upcoming Memorial Day is the first since Israel secured the return of the remains of Zachary Baumel, who had been missing since a 1982 battle in Lebanon in which he was presumably killed. Reports have pointed to intensive efforts to find and

repatriate the bodies of other Israelis thought to be in Syria for decades.

At a Jerusalem ceremony on Tuesday afternoon at the Yad Labanim memorial, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue working to bring home the bodies of troops who went missing in battle.

“We are not eager for battle but we know our willingness to sacrifice is the guarantor of our fate,” Netanyahu, who lost his brother Yoni during the 1976 Entebbe Operation, said at the event. “We will always remember — the fate of our country is hanging in the balance. And without our loved ones who perished, the country would have perished.”



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaking at a memorial event for fallen IDF soldiers at the Yad Lebanim center in Jerusalem, May 7, 2019. (Kobi Gideon/GPO)

The bodies of two Israeli soldiers missing since the 2014 Gaza war, as well as two Israeli civilians who went missing after entering the Strip of their own accord, are believed to be held by the Hamas terror group.

President Reuven Rivlin, Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein and Supreme Court Chief Justice Esther Hayut also took part in the ceremony, as well as families of fallen soldiers.

The main national ceremony, which takes place at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, is set to begin at 8 p.m., when a one-minute siren will ring out nationwide. The ceremony will be attended by Rivlin, IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi, IDF Chief Rabbi Eyal Karim, Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion and others.

Other ceremonies will be held throughout the country Tuesday evening. They include a traditional memorial songs event at Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, with leading Israeli artists; events at Safra Square and at the Knesset in Jerusalem; and also a controversial Israeli-Palestinian memorial ceremony that has [made headlines in recent days](#).



Palestinians and Israelis attend a shared memorial ceremony commemorating the fallen on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in Tel Aviv on April 30, 2017, as Israel marks its annual Memorial Day for fallen soldiers. (Tomer Neuberg/Flash90)

The High Court of Justice on Monday overturned a decision by the Defense Ministry to deny entry into Israel of 176 Palestinians due to participate in a special shared Memorial Day commemoration ceremony at 9 p.m. in Tel Aviv for victims of the conflict on both sides — a ruling slammed by Netanyahu, who is also defense minister, as “wrong and disappointing.”

The joint ceremony has been held since 2006 and is organized by Combatants for Peace and The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF). Critics accuse it of legitimizing terrorism and equating Israel’s fallen soldiers and those who attacked them, while supporters insist it represents an effort by those who have lost the most in the conflict to give meaning to their loved ones’ deaths by turning away from violence.

On Wednesday at 11 a.m., a second two-minute siren will sound, launching the daytime commemoration ceremonies for fallen soldiers centered on Jerusalem's Mount Herzl. A ceremony commemorating the terror victims will be held at 1 p.m.

At 7:45 p.m. Wednesday, Memorial Day will end with the national torch-lighting ceremony at Mount Herzl that will usher in Israel's 71st Independence Day.

The commemoration day, established in 1951 by then-prime minister and defense minister David Ben-Gurion, was set for the 4th of Iyar on the Jewish calendar, the day before Independence Day, which begins immediately after Memorial Day.

Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.

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Senior politician says Israel will allow some restricted goods into Strip and undertake other measures in return for

end to all 'resistance' except for 'peaceful' border protests.

Israel has agreed to implement a series of measures within a week, including lifting restrictions on the import of many goods into the Gaza Strip, as part of a ceasefire agreement with terror groups in the coastal enclave, a senior Palestinian official in the territory said Tuesday.

After two days of intense fighting over the weekend in which terror groups launched over 650 rockets at southern Israel and the Israel Defense Forces carried out more than 300 retaliatory strikes throughout Gaza, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad announced that Egypt and other international parties had successfully brokered a truce deal.

A number of Arabic news sites have published varying reports detailing the terms of the deal.

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The senior Gaza-based official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Times of Israel that the agreement “basically focuses on Israel implementing what it previously agreed to carry out, but now Israel has pledged for the first time to do so within one week.”

In return, he said Gaza's rulers are to put an end to all "resistance" against Israel, except for "peaceful" border protests.

He added that "all options would be on the table" if the Jewish state does not abide by the deal.

The Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories — the Defense Ministry body responsible for liaising with the Palestinians — declined to comment on the official's description of the ceasefire deal.

As a rule, Israeli officials do not acknowledge the existence of talks with the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, which it considers terror groups.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suggested on Monday that Israel has only temporarily halted its fire at Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

"Over the past two days, we have hit Hamas and Islamic Jihad with great force, attacking over 350 targets and terrorist leaders and activists, and destroying terrorist infrastructure," he said in a statement. "The campaign is not over and requires patience and judgment. We are preparing to continue. The goal was and remains to ensure the peace and security of the residents of the south."



Trucks loaded with goods and merchandise make deliveries to the Gaza Strip after the Kerem Shalom crossing was opened on August 15, 2018. (Flash90)

The Gaza-based official, who is a senior politician, said Israel agreed to “lift restrictions on importing 30% of so-called dual-use goods into Gaza and allow for increased exports from [the Strip].”

For the past several years, Israel has heavily restricted the entry into Gaza of products that it labels “dual-use,” meaning that they can be utilized for both civilian and military purposes. Palestinians in Gaza have been required to receive special permits to import goods that Israel categorizes as dual-use.

Jerusalem has long held that its restrictions on the movement of goods aim to prevent Hamas and other terror groups sworn to the destruction of the Jewish state from obtaining weapons and the materials to produce them.

The Gaza official also said Israel consented to allow the transfer of Qatari funds into the coastal enclave geared toward small grants for impoverished families, salaries of Hamas-appointed civil servants, and United Nations-supervised cash-for-work projects.

“These are all matters that Israel agreed to two months ago, but evaded implementing,” he said, adding that the Jewish state also approved the continued entry of Qatari-bought fuel into the Strip.

Over the past several months, Israel has at times permitted Qatar to distribute funds to poor families as well as Hamas-appointed government employees. It has also allowed for Qatari-purchased fuel to enter Gaza since October 2018 to power the Strip’s sole power plant.

Alluding to the cash-for-work program, the Gaza official said that it aims to help “new university graduates find employment.”

The UN agreed with Qatar in January to take \$20 million from Doha to create temporary employment opportunities in Gaza.

Jamie McGoldrick, the deputy UN special coordinator to the Middle East peace process, said on Monday in a call that he estimates the \$20 million will establish some 10,000 temporary jobs. He noted that additional funding announced by Qatar on Tuesday for Gaza will likely provide 20,000 extra temporary positions.

He said some of the jobs would last for six months, while others would be for nine months.

Qatar announced earlier Tuesday that it would send \$480 million to the West Bank and Gaza to “aid the brotherly Palestinian people in obtaining its basic needs.”

The unemployment rate in Gaza stands at 52 percent, according to the Palestinian Authority Central Bureau of Statistics.



Postal workers aid Palestinians who arrived at the central post office in Gaza City on January 26, 2019, to receive financial aid from the Qatari government given to impoverished families. (Mahmud Hams/AFP)

The Gaza official added that Israel also agreed to expand the fishing zone off of Gaza's coast.

"Israel consented to widening the fishing zone to six nautical miles in the north, nine near Gaza City, 12 in the center and 15 in the south," he said. "This is the same arrangement that was implemented at the start of April."

Israel expanded the fishing zone to 15 nautical miles in some areas off Gaza's coast in early April, but subsequently reduced and then canceled the move in response to rocket fire.

There are 3,700 fishermen in Gaza, the vast majority of whom live below the poverty line, a 2018 report by the B'Tselem human rights group said.

The official also said that Israel committed to “halting all aggression against Palestinians in Gaza including fishermen and farmers near the border.”

Israel has called on Palestinians in Gaza to stay away from the border with Israel, warning that approaching it puts their lives at risk.

For over the past year, the IDF has opened fire on many Palestinians in the coastal enclave participating in weekly border protests, including a large number who lobbed firebombs and rocks at soldiers in addition to carrying out other acts of violence.



Palestinians wave Palestinian flags as they try to climb the security fence on the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, east of Gaza City, on March 22, 2019. (Said Khatib/AFP)

The official added that in return for Israel implementing all the aforementioned measures within a week, Palestinians in Gaza will halt “all resistance against Israel except for the weekly protests along the border in their peaceful form.” This formulation would appear to include a halt to the launching of incendiary balloons and kites across the border into Israel.

Asked what would happen if Israel did not implement the measures within a week and whether terror groups would start firing rockets at Israel during the Eurovision Song Contest, he said “all options would be on the table.”

“We would need to meet and decide our response, but I can assure you that we will not allow Israel to evade abiding by its commitments,” he said.

The Eurovision Song Contest is slated to take place in Tel Aviv on May 14-18.

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