

How Did Hamas Acquire Advanced Rockets?

By Jonathan Broder

When Hamas opened its surprise attack on Israel just before dawn last Saturday, it unleashed sustained salvos of some 200 rockets and missiles each at Israeli cities and towns. By mid-morning, the militants had fired a total of some 2,500 projectiles that quickly overwhelmed Israel's Iron Dome air defense system. At the same time, Hamas also launched scores of armed drones that dropped powerful explosives on Israeli tanks and troops guarding the Gaza border while hundreds of its fighters smashed through the fortified border on foot and others landed on Israeli beaches in small boats and dropped from the air in para-gliders.

As Israelis ponder how the Mossad, Shin Bet and Aman military intelligence missed Hamas' preparations for its wide-ranging assault, another question is: How did Israel fail to prevent Hamas' from amassing an unprecedented stockpile of weapons—and some advanced ones at that?

Long Time Coming

It's no secret how Hamas, under an Israeli military blockade since 2007, has generally managed to stock its arsenals with such lethal military hardware. According to numerous independent analysts and regional experts, Iran, wearing the mantle of anti-Israel leadership in the Muslim world, has been providing Hamas with millions of dollars in funding, weapons and missile training since they first established ties in the 1980s.

In 2014, Gen. Ahmad Hosseini, then the commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps missile force, acknowledged the key role Tehran played in developing Hamas' missile program. Years earlier, he recounted, Hamas engineers had been "armed and trained by Hezbollah (Iran's proxy force in Lebanon). . . Some of them even came to Iran for training." Hosseini added that the father of Iran's own missile force, the late Gen. Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, "armed them and guided them."

Initially, Iran's Quds Force, together with Hezbollah, instructed Hamas engineers in making rockets from common materials like pipes, fertilizer and sugar, said Ido Levy, an associate fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a pro-Israel think tank, in a 2021 paper. This, he wrote, enabled Hamas to begin domestic production of its short-range Qassam rocket, which the militants fired at Israeli towns just north of the Gaza Strip.

Later, Iran began smuggling the components of its own home-manufactured Fajr3 and Fajr5 ballistic missiles, with ranges of 27 miles and 47 miles respectively, into Gaza by hiding them aboard ships with cargoes bound for European ports on the Mediterranean. ...