

Hamas Fires Rockets On Tel Aviv, Becomes Hoist By Its Own Petard(s)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



When [two rockets were fired](#) from Gaza toward Tel Aviv on March 14, they landed without doing any damage to life or property. But it was the first time since 2014 that any Hamas rockets had been aimed at Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city and economic hub, and the attack was of great symbolic value. It had to be answered by the IDF, by inflicting sufficient damage to ensure there would be no repetition of such an attack.

Of course the terrorist groups in Gaza were quick to claim they had nothing to do it. Hamas denied responsibility for the attack on Tel Aviv, saying the rockets were launched when the group's military wing was meeting with Egyptian mediators to try to strengthen a ceasefire with Israel.

In an unusual step that indicated Hamas was attempting to

prevent further escalation, the Hamas interior ministry said the rocket fire went “against the national consensus” and promised to take action against the perpetrators.

Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees, two smaller Gaza armed factions, also denied responsibility.

Israel was convinced that Hamas members did indeed launch the rockets, but the IDF eventually concluded that the rockets had been fired from Gaza toward Tel Aviv by mistake, a defense official said on Friday, March 15, the day after the attack – and after Israel’s retaliation. Lower-level Hamas operatives, performing routine maintenance on the rockets, may have inadvertently launched the rockets, or there may have been a technical malfunction.

Before the IDF concluded that the rockets had been fired by mistake, Israel had already responded with overwhelming force, in the early morning of March 15, hitting over 100 Hamas targets. The army said targets included an office complex in Gaza City used to plan and command Hamas militant activities, the headquarters responsible for the planning and execution of attacks in the West Bank, an underground complex that served as Hamas’ main rocket-manufacturing site for standard-grade rockets, and a military training site that served as Hamas’ center used for drone development.

This kind of immediate and massive retaliation by Israel is what keeps the peace – that is, prevents major war – between Gaza and Israel. The rapidity with which both Hamas and Islamic Jihad disclaimed responsibility shows how frightened – and with reason – they are of what the IDF can, and did do, in retaliation. Israel, however, holds Hamas responsible for all attacks that come from Gaza, including those that are inadvertently launched, as appears to have been the case here.

While the IDF has concluded that the Hamas attack was a mistake, there is one reason why it might have been deliberate

after all. On Thursday, the very day when those two rockets were fired at about 9 p.m., there had been street protests in Gaza against Hamas rule. The protestors were angry at the high cost of living for ordinary Gazans and furious at the evident prosperity of Hamas officials. In order to keep the protests from growing, it is possible that some Hamas officials decided a diversion needed to be created. Two rockets sent skyward toward Tel Aviv, which would inevitably trigger Israeli retaliation, fit the bill. That Israeli response might serve, if only temporarily, to reunite the people of Gaza with their Hamas rulers, seen as bravely defying the Zionist enemy. But if the attack – and the response to it – had been intended to divert attention from the widespread economic discontent that fueled the protests against it, Hamas likely underestimated the severity of Israel's response. With more than 100 targets hit in Gaza, the Hamas officials no longer appeared to be bravely defying the Israelis, but rather, foolishly endangering the safety and well-being of ordinary Gazans.

Borrowing from Hamlet, in firing its rockets toward Tel Aviv, Hamas offered an example of being hoist by its own petard(s). And, to lift another line from Hamlet: "Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished."

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